



Australian Government
Australian Public Service
Commission

Getting a Job

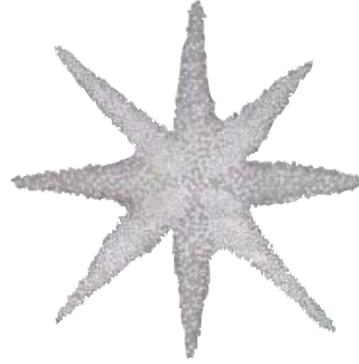
in the Australian Public Service





Public Calling

APS Indigenous careers

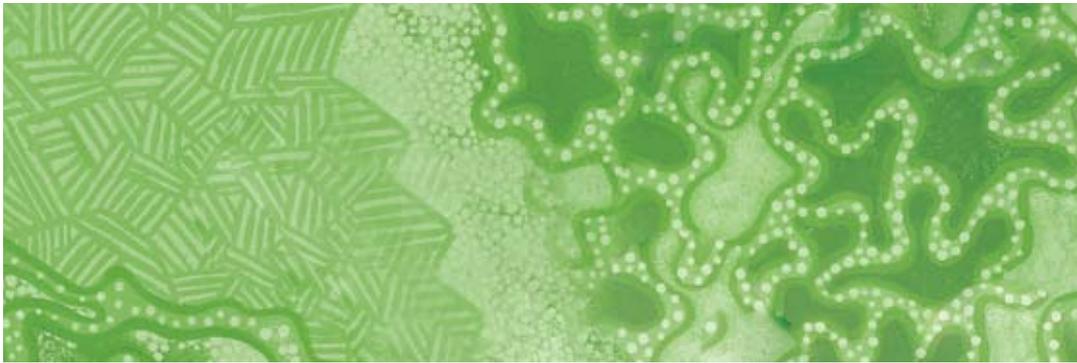


Call to Indigenous Australians

The Australian Government wants to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work in the Australian Public Service (APS).

The idea of getting an APS job might be strange and unfamiliar to you but don't be put off. This booklet will help you apply for jobs in the APS.

The APS is at the forefront of shaping the future for Australia and you can be part of it.



APS employment levels or classifications

Jobs in the APS are graded into different classifications and paid accordingly. You need a certain level of experience and skills to be considered for jobs at different classifications.

- APS 1 and 2—general entry level positions, cadetships and traineeships.
- APS 3 and 4—general administrative, technical, programme delivery, regulatory and graduate positions.
- APS 5 and 6—senior administrative, technical, project and service positions.
- Executive Level 1 and 2— middle management positions.
- Senior Executive—high level management positions.

You don't need public service experience or qualifications

You don't always need specific work experience or formal qualifications to be in the running for a public service job. You may not have done that exact type of job before but you may have the skills required. Employers are looking for people who have general life experience and are enthusiastic, reliable, good communicators and willing to learn.

Don't underestimate your skills. You probably have relevant skills and experience that you have gained through doing other activities, e.g. voluntary work, being on committees or organising community events.

Think about your transferable skills, that is, skills you have used elsewhere e.g. organising skills, budgeting skills, communication skills, teaching skills, outdoor work skills or computer skills.

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Where are APS jobs advertised?

Ongoing (permanent) jobs are advertised on the APSjobs website—www.apsjobs.gov.au

Each Australian Government agency also advertises its own jobs on its own website. Find a list of these at www.australia.gov.au/departments

The Australian JobSearch website includes jobs specifically for Indigenous Australians—<http://jobsearch.gov.au/>

Specific Indigenous-related APS positions are often advertised in Indigenous media e.g. the Koori Mail and National Indigenous Times.

APS jobs are also sometimes advertised in newspapers in the states, territories and regions where the jobs are located.

Job Network providers can help you locate job ads.



Identified positions

Some jobs in the APS are known as 'identified positions'. These are ones which require specific knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian cultures and issues, and the ability to communicate sensitively and effectively with Indigenous communities. You don't have to be an Indigenous Australian to apply for these jobs, but you do have to be able to work appropriately with Indigenous people.

There are also 'special measures provisions' in the APS that allow some jobs to be advertised as restricted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants only in order to assist employment opportunities for Indigenous people.

APS job ads will state if the job is an identified or special measures position.

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Understanding job words

What is job classification?

The level of APS jobs is based on the duties that are required to be performed. Jobs are classified and paid at different levels according to the complexity, responsibility and skills involved.

What is selection documentation?

This is the package of information available from the agency that gives you more details about the job. It usually includes a duty statement and selection criteria.

What is a duty statement?

It lists the duties and tasks you are required to perform in the job.

What are selection criteria?

These are the skills, experience and personal qualities that you need to do the job properly. You are assessed for the job in relation to the selection criteria. Your written application should explain how you meet each of the specific selection criteria.

What is a resume or CV?

It is a brief written description of your work experience, education and training, skills, achievements, interests and contact details. You should always provide a resume with your application.

What is a selection panel?

It is a small group of people who assess the applicants for a position and make a recommendation about the best person for the job.

What is shortlisting?

It is the process that the selection panel goes through to assess written applications and make a shortlist of the applicants they want to interview or further assess for the job.

Researching a job

If you see an interesting job advertised, do some basic job research. Get the selection documentation and recruitment information kit from the agency. Find out about the agency from its website. What does it do? Can you imagine yourself working there?

Call the contact person

The contact person can tell you more about what the job specifically involves. They are there to help you—so give them a call.

Ask them what tasks does it actually involve e.g. project work, public contact, outdoor work, writing, computer work, driving? Who are the clients? Who will you report to? Who will you be working with? Where is the job based? What are the opportunities for career development?

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The APS recruitment process

This flowchart will help you understand the typical APS recruitment process. These times are an average and the process can be longer, shorter or slightly different than shown here.

Job advertised in APSJobs and newspapers

- ↳ Closing date for written applications
2 weeks since job advertised
- ↳ Applications shortlisted by selection team
3 weeks since job advertised
- ↳ Shortlisted applicants contacted regarding an interview
4 weeks since job advertised
- ↳ Interviews or assessments held
5-6 weeks since job advertised
- ↳ Preferred applicant selected and recruitment report prepared
7-8 weeks since job advertised
- ↳ Preferred applicant contacted and offered position
9-10 weeks since job advertised
- ↳ Unsuccessful interviewees contacted
9-10 weeks since job advertised
- ↳ New recruit commences in job
11-12 weeks since job advertised

Writing job applications

To apply for an APS job you need to submit a written application by the closing date. Most agencies these days prefer applications to be emailed or submitted through a website.

The purpose of the written application is to:

- Show how you meet the selection criteria
- Summarise your ability to do the job
- Show your writing ability
- Get you to an interview or to the next stage of assessment

Your application should include:

- Your name, address and phone contact
- The name of the job you are applying for
- A statement of how you meet each of the selection criteria
- Your resume, including any qualifications you have
- Contact details for at least two referees—people who can vouch for your capacity to do the job
- Completed agency application forms

Present your application well as it will determine whether you get to the next stage:

- Watch your spelling and grammar
- Use clean layout e.g. spacing, headings, keep it neat and tidy

Ask someone to help you write your application if you are not sure about it. It is always useful to get someone to read each draft of your application, give you feedback and check the final draft for any errors.

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Selection criteria

Selection criteria highlight the skills, experience and personal qualities needed to do the job. Here are some examples of common APS selection criteria.

- Demonstrated capacity to communicate effectively
- Good organisational and administrative skills
- Proven ability to work as part of a team
- Well developed customer service skills

What does it mean to ‘address selection criteria’?

Most of the time, your CV alone will not be enough to get you an APS job. When applying for a position it is likely that you will be asked to address the selection criteria.

To address the selection criteria, write each individual criterion as a heading and write at least one paragraph under each heading saying how you have previously demonstrated that experience, skill or quality. Highlight your relevant skills and experience by describing your major responsibilities in current or previous work, including unpaid work. You can use some dot points if you like.

Be careful to stick to the word limit if one has been set.

Addressing selection criteria

The most important aspect of addressing selection criteria is to provide evidence through relevant examples. Support your claims with actual, specific examples of what you have done and how well you did it. One way to do this is to use the **STAR** model:

1. **Situation**—Outline a specific circumstance where you developed the particular experience or used the required skills or qualities. Set the context of the situation.
2. **Task**—What was your role? What did you *have* to do?
3. **Actions**—What *did* you do and *how* did you do it?
4. **Results**—What did you achieve? What were the results of what you did?

Example of addressing selection criteria

Here is an example of using the **STAR** approach to address selection criteria.

Demonstrated capacity to communicate effectively

‘My ability to communicate effectively with a range of people was demonstrated in my position as receptionist with the XYZ community organisation. I dealt with members of the general public, officers from the local council and government departments, and representatives from private businesses on a daily basis.

I communicated with these people face to face, over the phone and through use of email. As I was the first point of contact for the organisation it was very important that I was professional, courteous and helpful in my interactions. In recognition of my positive interpersonal skills my temporary position was extended for nine months beyond my initial contract.’

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The interview

If you are shortlisted by the selection panel based on your written application you may be invited to an interview. If you live far away, the interview might be conducted by phone.

To get ready for the interview it is good to practise how you will tell the selection panel about yourself. Using the selection criteria as a guide, think about what sorts of questions they might ask and practise answering them with someone you know.

The selection panel wants to know about you, what experience and skills you have, and what you can offer in the job. Try to relax and have a chat. If you don't understand a question, ask for it to be repeated or explained. It is okay to take notes with you to the interview to remind you of the main points you want to cover.

Present yourself well—be neat and tidy when you go for an interview. And always be on time.



Behavioural based interview questions

Many questions asked in interviews are behavioural based. Behavioural questions usually begin with a statement like: 'Tell us about a time when...' or 'Describe a situation where...'.

You need to be specific in answering these questions. Through giving specific examples of what you have done you demonstrate, rather than just claim, that you have the skills required.

Here is an example of how to answer a behavioural based question using the **STAR** method.

Can you tell us about a situation that demonstrates your organisational skills?

'Last year I organised the local Aboriginal community organisation's first art exhibition. My job was to coordinate the whole event including getting artists to participate, organising venue hire, promoting the event, managing the opening and organising volunteers to help. I set up a team of 12 volunteers and gave them all their own roles and tasks. I prepared a project plan for the whole event with deadlines so we kept on track. I networked with Aboriginal people from across our region including at high schools, the TAFE and community centres, to encourage them to exhibit their work. I managed to get a local sporting hero to open the exhibition, and also to do local radio and newspaper ads to promote it.

This really helped raise the profile of the exhibition. We had 60 artists exhibit work, with over 2,000 people through the doors during the two weeks it was on, and we made \$8,000 for our organisation. The exhibition was such a success that we are planning on holding another one next year.'

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Hypothetical scenario interview questions

You might also be asked hypothetical scenario questions at the interview. These are questions that set up imaginary work-related problems, and require you to come up with solutions. Hypothetical questions create the scenario then ask something like: 'How would you respond to this problem?' Here is an example of a hypothetical scenario question.

You answer a phone call from a client who is extremely rude and angry because their overdue payment has not come through. How would you deal with this situation?

'I'd ask the person to calmly explain their problem so I can help them. I'd stay polite and helpful. I'd allow them to have their say and I'd acknowledge their concerns. This can help to diffuse a heated situation. I would ask them for their specific details and tell them that I will look into their case, and get back to them soon. I'd keep them informed of progress and make certain that it was properly resolved.'

Assessments

You could be asked to participate in work sample tests as a way of assessing whether you are suitable for a job. Work samples involve applicants doing exercises that they might be required to do as part of the job e.g. a writing exercise or a computer skills test.

Sometimes work sample tests are done at an assessment centre. Assessment centres involve getting a number of the applicants together for various activities such as job simulations, role-playing and group discussions.

Your actions and behaviour are observed and assessed. Skills and attributes such as client service approach, teamwork, interpersonal communication and building relationships can be assessed through group activities.

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Don't give up

Be persistent—you may not get the first job you go for, but its very important not to give up. If you are serious about getting a job—apply for many—you are more likely to be successful.

Once you have written one application and been for one interview you will be more familiar with the process and it will be much easier doing it the next time.

It is always useful to call the contact officer to get feedback on how you could improve your written application or interview next time around.



Want more info?

For more information on how to find and apply for APS jobs see *Cracking the Code* at www.apsjobs.gov.au

For information about jobs see:

Australian Public Service Commission website:

www.apsc.gov.au/indigenous

Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations websites:

www.deewr.gov.au

www.jobjuice.gov.au

www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Individual/IndigenousAustralians

Want to talk?

To talk to someone about jobs with the APS, phone the Indigenous Employment Team at the Australian Public Service Commission on 02 6202 3593.

For more help in finding and applying for jobs, talk to your school, TAFE or university teachers or counsellors, or your Job Network officer.

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