Recruitment and Good Practice

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 the process that leads to a formal offer of employment. As such it is governed by legislation, including anti discrimination and law governing equal employment opportunities.

Employers, managers and supervisors must treat all their job applicants and employees on the basis of their individual merit and not because of irrelevant personal characteristics........ In the recruitment process, all jobs (including traineeships and apprenticeships) must generally be open to all people on the basis of merit only. (Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW)

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. All tasks should be timetabled in advance. You may not successfully recruit during the first round of recruitment. The process can take months from the decision to recruit to the person commencing in the position.

A checklist for managing the key steps leading to recruitment would include:

- 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 of recruiting for the position including where to advertise and who should be included on the selection panel

- Develop the advertisement using the job description, including minimum qualifications and selection criteria as well as:
  - Deadline for applications
  - Salary range and other key benefits
  - Contact person for further information

Job description and selection criteria

Job descriptions and selection criteria are critically important. The job description describes the role including what it does, how it does it and the reporting requirements (see job analysis below). The selection criteria describe 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.

Job descriptions provide the basis not only for recruitment but also performance appraisal and ensuring the work carried out by staff aligns with the organisations objectives. A well-developed job description assists candidates and position holders to understand their duties and responsibilities clarifying the boundaries of their role.

If an existing job description requires revising before recruitment, it is useful to reassess it with the person currently in the position. Alternatively, it could be subject to a job analysis.

A job analysis typically asks the 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?

Selection criteria are based on the job description and develop the benchmarks that will be used to screen prospective candidates and select the preferred person for the position. Key factors to consider when developing or revising selection criteria are identifying the essential skills, experience or qualifications necessary for the position as well as the desirable skills, experience or qualifications. It is also important to ensure the criteria are specific, measurable and job-related.

It is also important to ensure the criteria do not directly or indirectly discriminate against potential candidates. This is often the stage where potentially discriminatory values, explanations about how a job is done, or the 'type' of person required are inadvertently built into selection processes. It is useful to include someone independent of the process with experience in recruitment to check key documentation and identify any potentially discriminatory practice.

Advertising

The most common method is to advertise on job websites. They have target audiences or 'demographics'

NCOSS
NSW Council of Social Service

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 to all potential candidates. Effective strategies include:

- Write in plain English

- Use job websites compatible with software that can 'read out' web pages for people who might have difficulty reading online.

For further access enabling suggestions see the Vision Australia website.

If you are using a recruitment agency they must be clear about your requirements and act in accordance with your organisations employment practices and the relevant legislation.

Shortlisting

As part of the shortlisting process for interview, all applications need to be assessed against both the essential and desirable selection criteria. Ideally all members of the interview panel will participate in this process. It is important that this process be consistent and all decisions and the reasons for them are documented where the documentation is held in a confidential file and referred to if any concerns regarding the selection process are later raised.

Selection and interview process

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

The selection panel may include Board members and staff as well as an independent or external member. If interviewing for a culturally sensitive position, best practice would include a representative from that culture with skills relevant to the position. A mix of genders is also recommended.

Prior to the interview the panel would be provided with a copy of the interview schedule, the advertisement, selection criteria, interview questions and copies of the candidates' applications. All copies and notes should be collected at the end of the selection process.

Most job interviews are approximately 30-40 minutes but frequently longer for senior positions. 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 all candidates are asked the same core questions. It is appropriate to ask further questions to clarify or expand on the information provided to ensure the interview process gathers the information required to assess the potential of each candidate.

Depending on the competencies being assessed, the interview may include the completion of a set exercise, 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. Psychometric tests are more often employed for management positions or positions where

high level specific skills are required. Most tests must be used under license and have associated costs. They may be held prior to or after the interview. All results must be available to the interview panel prior to deciding on the successful candidate.

Checking references

Reference checks can reveal information that is key to the selection process. They may provide information a candidate is unlikely to reveal or another perspective on their performance in previous roles. Ideally one of the referees would be a previous supervisor.

Some organisations develop a standardised list of questions for reference checks. This would include verifying the relationship between the candidate and the referee and the length of time they have known each other. The interview panel can identify other questions to drill down into specific aspects of the information provided by the candidate. Notes from referee checks should   be documented and kept on file.

Making and offer

Having assessed the feedback from the referee checks and the interview panel is confident the chosen candidate is the best person, the candidate is offered the position, usually verbally in the first instance. If they accept the position, the start date is agreed on and the offer formalised in writing.

Once the formal offer has been accepted in writing, the other interview candidates should be advised of the outcome. The non-shortlisted applicants should also be advised in writing that they were unsuccessful. It is good practice and fair to offer unsuccessful candidates feedback on their interview (strengths and weakness) based on the notes from the selection panel.

General Principles

Matters regarding sex, marital or domestic status, pregnancy, age, colour, race, ethnic or ethno-religious background, homosexuality, transgender status, family and carer's responsibilities 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 person's housing status, criminal record or credit history unless these factors relate to a specific requirement for the position or are a requirement of the funding body.

Those involved in the recruitment process should be required to declare any conflict of interest relating to any candidate, for example, family connections or friendship with a candidate.

Confidentiality must be maintained at all times. All documentation and communication with prospective candidates should reiterate 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. All surplus documents should be destroyed.

Resources

Fair Work Ombudsman
- Hiring employees
- A guide to hiring new employees
- A guide to starting a new job

Australian Human Rights Commission
- A step-by-step guide to preventing discrimination in recruitment
- Good practice good business factsheets

Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW
- Employers and Managers

NSW Industrial Relations
- Good recruitment practice

NCOSS Sector Support
- Templates and Resources
  - Addressing Poor Performance
  - Annual Performance Review
  - Grievance and Complaint Processes
  - Managing Staff Performance
  - Professional Supervision
  - Undertaking Job Evaluations

Community Door
- Recruitment of staff

Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies (NADA)
- Staff Recruitment Procedure
- Staff Induction and Orientation Procedure
- Staff Induction and Orientation Checklist

NB: The above websites were accessible on 9 December 2015. If the links do not work search on the title of the document or go directly to the organisation's website