

Bestseller Guide for Government Job Applications

How to GET IN and GET PROMOTED

in the PUBLIC SERVICE SECTOR

**COMPLETELY
UPDATED!**

Carolyn Smith BA, LLB, CMRW, CERW, CEIC

How to GET IN and GET PROMOTED in the Public Service Sector

By Carolyn Smith

<https://carolynsmith.com.au>

ISBN: 978-0-9803949-0-0

Copyright © 2021

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my Dad, Kenneth Frank Smith (Grumps) who passed away from Brain Cancer in December 2018. Always loved and in my thoughts!

The Legal Stuff

By Carolyn Smith - All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recorded or otherwise without written permission from the publisher.

Every effort has been made to ensure that this book is free from error or problems. Though I've worked hard and long to provide accurate information, I can't take any responsibility for loss or action to any individual or corporation acting, or not acting, as a result of the material presented here.

Examples and advice in this book are not to be interpreted as a promise or guarantee of your success. Getting in and getting promoted in the public service sector is entirely dependent on you the reader and in the way you use this book, ideas and techniques. We do not purport this to be a resource that guarantees your success.

Some links and information presented in this book may change.

Contents

Manual Outline

About the Author	7
Introduction	8
Chapter 1 Understanding the selection process - the boring BUT crucial stuff!.....	11
Recruitment based on merit	11
The selection process	11
The Advertisement/Application Pack.....	12
What you need to know about the application pack.....	13
Eligibility	13
Closing Date.....	13
Contact Officer.....	14
Documents that need to be submitted.....	17
Make sure you are sufficiently qualified for the position	17
Classification	18
Suitability against the selection criteria	19
What you need to know about submitting your Application	20
Chapter 2 What happens in Practice (the stuff they prefer not to talk about!).....	21
Positions advertised with a person acting in the role.....	21
Nepotism (it is real)	21
Poor Quality Application Packs.....	22
Before you proceed to Part Two	24
Chapter 3 What you need to know about selection criteria / work related requirements	26
They are asking what? (Unravelling selection criteria).....	32
Chapter 4 What you need to know about Résumés, Cover Letters, Application Forms and your Referees	36
Cover Letters	36
What you need to know about your Application Form	37
What you need to know about your referees.....	38
Before you proceed to Part Three	40
Chapter 5 Meeting the agency's requirements.....	42
Agency checklist.....	42
The unwritten rules.....	43

Chapter 6	Research.....	44
	Researching the agency	44
	Contact officer	44
	Researching skills and knowledge areas.....	45
	Research material for your job descriptions.....	46
Chapter 7	Understanding Public Service Values	47
	APS Values	47
	Impartial	47
	Committed to service	47
	Accountable	47
	Respectful	47
	Ethical	47
	Code of Conduct.....	48
	Service Charter	48
	Common selection criteria	49
	Occupational Health & Safety / Workplace Health & Safety	49
	Workplace Diversity.....	50
	Employment Equity and Anti- Discrimination.....	51
Chapter 8	Identifying your skills and achievements	52
	Hard and soft skills	52
	Compile a career portfolio.....	55
	Identify your achievements - your key to a sizzling government application.....	56
Chapter 9	Developing a case for core selection/assessment criteria	60
	Developing a case for Management.....	60
	Developing a case for Team Work.....	61
	Developing a case for Leadership.....	61
	Developing a case for Interpersonal Skills	62
	Developing a case for Communication Skills	62
	Developing a case for Organisational Skills.....	63
	Developing a case for APS Values	64
	Before you proceed to Part Four	66
Chapter 10	Steps to creating a knock out Résumé	67
	Step 1: Contact Details.....	68
	Step 2: Profile	68
	Step 3: Skills	69
	Step 4: Employment History	70

Step 5: Education & Qualifications.....	72
Step 6: Optional Extras	72
Step 7: Edit, Edit, Edit!.....	73
Additional Tips and Recommendations	73
Chapter 11 Addressing selection criteria	76
Step One – Stick to the basic rules (or face elimination)	76
Step Two – Develop a framework	78
Step Three – Use a selection criteria model	82
**** BEYOND the STAR or CAR MODEL ****	92
I have just outlined how to use the STAR or CAR model to successfully address selection criteria. These are great methodologies and you should use these methodologies if specified by the agency. But if you are confident about your application writing skills, you can use more advanced methods to provide evidence in your application.	92
PLEASE NOTE: Only use these advanced methods if you are a highly competent writer and the agency/department does not require you to use a STAR or CAR to address the application.	95
Step Four – Incorporate your understanding of the position and agency in the selection criteria	95
Step Five – Use selection criteria speak	101
Step Six- Make it easy to read with a well laid-out document.....	105
Step Seven - Proofread your application	107
Chapter 12 Avoiding the common pitfalls.....	109
Chapter 13 Behavioural Questions	112
Chapter 14 Cover letters	114
Chapter 15 Expressions of Interest and Statements of Claim.....	122
Like a 1 or 2 page cover letter, a statement of claim is part of a big trend away from long and complex applications that require a candidate to address a long list of selection criteria.	122
Step Three: Writing Framework	123
Chapter 16 Addressing the Integrated Leadership System and other capability frameworks	125
Chapter 17 Graduate applications.....	131
Chapter 18 136	
Addressing applications where a strict word or character limits apply	136
Chapter 19 Addressing poorly developed selection criteria	140

Repetition of skills, personal qualities and knowledge	140
Too many selection criteria	140
Selection criteria that are difficult to understand	141
Selection criteria containing spelling mistakes and poor grammar	141
Chapter 20 Online Applications	142
Chapter 21 Solutions to other common problems.....	143
Length of response per selection criteria, where no word or character limit is prescribed	143
Adding 'meat on the bone' for criteria you are weak on.....	143
Chapter 22 Turbo-boosting your writing output	148
Chapter 23 Useful links and resources.....	150

About the Author

Hi, I'm Carolyn Smith, a leading expert in the career management and the recruitment sector. I hold elite industry certifications, including as an Internationally Certified Master Resume Writer, (one of only 43 resume writers in the world) and I have won industry awards, including as recipient of Career Directors International, Career Innovator Award.

I've crafted more than 3,000 career stories to drive game-changing results for highly skilled talent with a focus on managers, professionals and executives. I've worked with everyone from former Senators, C-Level Executives and Board Members through to entry-level administrators to funeral parlour directors.

I'm also a prior solicitor, (top tier law firm), legal editor, business development officer at the largest global law firm - Clifford Chance LLP and was one of the worst retail assistant's in the world.

Since 2003, I've written applications for Government, (federal, state, local and territory), universities and the not-for-profit sector, that have required responses to selection criteria, assessment criteria, behavioural questions, resumes, expressions of interest, statement of claims and cover letters.

I've helped thousands of jobseekers like you, GET IN and GET PROMOTED in the public service sector.



Introduction

Why this manual?

Wouldn't it be great if you knew how to create a government application that resulted in you consistently being invited for interviews, or perhaps more importantly, generating more interviews that are focused in the area of interest you wish to land a job!

Unfortunately for the overwhelming majority of candidates, creating a government application can be a frustrating and tedious process and the majority of candidates fail to be selected for interview due to a poorly written application, or a lack of understanding as to how the public sector process works.

Having worked with candidates at all levels from both the public and private sector, I see countless qualified job seekers disheartened by the process. Surprisingly, many are unaware of the basic principles of the selection process and what is involved. What's more, those that understand the process, still fail to produce quality applications and fail to talk about their achievements.

When I started writing government applications many years ago, I discovered a couple of books on the marketplace and countless free online resources relating to government applications. However, none of them provided a step-by-step guide on how to put an application together and the examples provided were of a poor quality. Years later, after much trial and error and reviewing and writing thousands of applications, the majority of my clients will not only secure an interview, but many are ranked in the top five percent of candidates.

In this manual, I share with you all my trade secrets, so you can stop wasting countless hours on applications that won't result in your selection for interview.

As a bonus, I have also provided a complimentary supplement on how to perform at an interview. After all, you will probably need this resource since it is highly likely that if you follow this manual closely, you will be invited for an interview.

This manual is UNIQUE, in that while other books outline the process, this manual goes further. It arms you with knowledge relating to the inherent flaws in the government selection process, as well as giving you insider tips on how to construct high quality statements, even down to providing you with the tools of the trade to creating applications, even if you are weak on one or more criteria.

If you are new to the process, I am afraid there are no short cuts to ensuring your success. It can take countless hours of research, careful thought and preparation, and writing and re-writing to ensure that you construct a high-quality application.

If you are already from the public service sector, then this manual will help you gain your well-deserved promotion, by providing you with the tools and tips from a professional, so you can significantly improve your application.

By mastering government applications, you could triple, or quadruple your success and will turn rejection letters into telephone calls inviting you to interview!

Get the most out of the manual

The manual is written like a course. In fact, it outlines exactly how I work as a professional, from the initial steps of ascertaining whether my client is sufficiently qualified for the position, understanding the requirements of the agency, obtaining detailed information relating to my client's skills, knowledge, experience and achievements, through to writing and editing the application. (Responding to selection criteria, statements of claim, work related questions, behavioural questions, résumés and cover letters).

Work on one chapter at a time. Each chapter of the manual is designed to be read in order and even if you are from the public service sector, don't skip chapters, as each chapter provides you with the relevant information necessary to attract all the interviews you'll ever need for a successful career.

Remember, there is nothing theoretical in this manual. There's not one single thing here that I haven't done for my clients. If you follow this manual and work like a professional, you will get invited to interviews!

If you read this manual like you read most books you won't get much out of it.

Don't

- Quickly skim through the material.
- Fail to come to grip with the fundamentals.

Do

- Work on one chapter at a time.
- Take time (lots of time) to understand the process.
- Write down your thoughts and ideas.
- Do the recommended tasks, in particular your CAR's (mandatory).
- Constantly refine and 'tweak' your application.

Feedback welcome

If any information contained in this manual could be improved, clarified or included, please let me know. My goal is to make this manual the most useful resource you've ever used in relation to public sector applications. My direct email address is: yourworksearch@gmail.com

Remember - The magic ingredient in this manual is YOU. The information won't do anything just sitting on your computer. It is vital that you not only understand the information, but also apply it, so you can start securing interviews.

Thank you for purchasing How to GET IN and GET PROMOTED in the public service sector. I hope it may serve to help you obtain your dream job or promotion in the public sector.

Take care and all the very best

Carolyn F Smith

PART ONE

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

Chapter 1

Understanding the selection process - the boring BUT crucial stuff!

Before you get started it is vital you have a basic understanding of the government recruitment process, so you can understand what is required of you, and more importantly use this information to ensure you apply for relevant roles and write an application in a way that ensures you get selected for interview.

Recruitment based on merit

Briefly, selection in the public service sector is based on **MERIT**, pursuant to *Public Service Act 1999 at Federal Level* (and various other Acts at state Level, e.g., *Public Services Act 2008 (QLD)*, *Government Sector Employment Act 2013 (NSW)* and *Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA)*). That is - the process must be free from discrimination, should be carried out with impartiality and integrity and the assessment criteria designed to match the skills, qualities and knowledge that the agency requires in order for the candidate to effectively carry out the role.

What this means to you as the candidate, is that **your application will be assessed against other candidates** in accordance as to how well you have demonstrated your relevant skills, qualities and knowledge against the requirements of the position (skills, attributes and qualifications). During the assessment process your application will be ranked against other candidates, to determine who will be invited to interview. (In the same way you were marked and ranked when submitting assignments, essays and sitting exams).

The process also means that if you don't meet a good portion of the department or agency's requirement relating to skills, qualities and knowledge, experience and qualifications, then it does not matter whether you think you could do the job blind folded, you simply don't meet their requirements, so you won't be selected for interview.

Government is about selecting people with proven skills, knowledge and experience, not about securing talent!

The selection process

The key stages to the selection process are:

- ~ Requirements (knowledge, skills and attributes required of a candidate) determined for the role.
- ~ Application documentation prepared, including assessment/selection criteria (it is not unusual for these to have already been prepared, in particular if a department or agency is using generic criteria, or capability frameworks and occasionally the application documentation prepared are just a re-hash from another application).
- ~ Selection process designed (in most cases, the selection process is already pre-determined).
- ~ Selection panel members selected (usually made up of 3 members) and a contact officer is appointed (for quite a large number of roles, the contact officer is also a panel member, or the manager to the position).

- ~ Vacancy advertised in the Gazette for federal jobs, or other online sites (state government job search sites, local government council sites and commercial sites such as SEEK and LinkedIn), recruitment sites, along with major and local newspapers. Occasionally recruiters will be running the process, so you will also see these advertised via recruiter channels.
- ~ Application forms made available online or sent directly upon request to candidates.
- ~ Application closes and candidates' applications forwarded by HR to each member of the selection panel.
- ~ Each selection panel member assesses each candidate separately and then meets to determine a short list for interview purposes.
- ~ Interviews held and other selection processes conducted – e.g., direct testing exercises and psychometric tests.
- ~ Referee reports obtained.
- ~ A selection report is prepared and submitted to a delegate, who reviews report and signs it off.
- ~ Candidates notified of outcome and outcome published.
- ~ Feedback provided and appeals made (if applicable).

In practice, recruitment and selection processes **do vary enormously**, depending on the agency or organisation. Many departments / agencies have the flexibility to choose what selection method they use, so when applying for roles, it is essential to obtain the application information pack, so you can meet their specific requirements.

The Advertisement/Application Pack

When applying for a role within the public service sector **it is essential to obtain an application pack** (virtually all agencies/departments allow you to download the application pack directly online, or alternatively, contact the designated contact officer who will forward the application pack to you).

While each agency varies slightly – the key information contained in the application pack is usually as follows:

- ~ Name of the Agency / Department / Organisation
- ~ Sub unit
- ~ Location of the position
- ~ Job title
- ~ Classification
- ~ Details of salary
- ~ Vacancy reference number or position number
- ~ Background information on the responsibilities of the agency and responsibilities of the sub unit
- ~ Job description / duties statement
- ~ Closing date
- ~ Whether it is ongoing or non-ongoing (temporary)
- ~ Assessment methods / selection process
- ~ Information relating to public sector values and code of conduct
- ~ Selection criteria / assessment criteria / work related requirements
- ~ Capability framework
- ~ Documentation required for submission, including cover sheet, cover letter, résumé / curriculum vitae, selection criteria, response to work related questions, behavioural questions etc.

- ~ Submission details
- ~ Contact officer
- ~ Eligibility

What you need to know about the application pack

Eligibility

Many jobs within the public service sector are restricted to candidates that are **Australian citizens, or Australian citizenship is pending. Other agencies limit applications to Australian citizens and Australian residents.**

Unfortunately, some application packs I encounter don't specify these eligibility requirements relating to citizenship, so if this information is not contained on the agency's web site or in the application pack and you are not an Australian citizen, check with the relevant contact officer to ensure that you are eligible to apply for the role in question.

Generally speaking, if applying for a federal job, you will need to be an Australian Citizen, in particular for departments such as Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO).

Other eligibility criteria include having the appropriate level of security clearance, health checks, or relevant qualifications, such as a bachelor's degree.

If you don't meet the eligibility requirement relating to citizenship/residency, then an agency head is able to appoint an APS employee if it is considered appropriate to do so.

What this in reality means, is that unless you are an outstanding applicant, and a suitable candidate could not be found amongst the band of Australian citizens (due to skills shortages) then you will not be eligible for appointment.

Closing Date

It is **imperative that you get your application in on time – both day and designated time e.g., 5pm Eastern Standard Time.**

Late applications are accepted entirely at the discretion of the selection panel and acceptance will depend on a number of factors, including the number of quality candidates that apply for the position, whether your application is outstanding or borderline, and whether there is a shortage of qualified candidates for the position you are applying for.

If time is a critical factor and there is no way you can meet the deadline, then touch base immediately with the contact officer to arrange an extension in writing, then submit your application cover sheet on the day the application is due, with a note attached detailing when your full response will be submitted.

While a late submission can knock you out of contention for career opportunities, including positions you are highly qualified for - on the positive side a couple of my clients in the past have successfully obtained extensions resulting in interviews and in turn jobs.

But please keep in mind **if the position has attracted a large number of applicants, it is HIGHLY UNLIKELY that your late application will be accepted.** In addition, late applicants lose their right to appeal against the outcomes of the recruitment and selection process.

Finally, some jobs are listed as a continuous pool and you are able to submit your application at any time.

Contact Officer

The designated contact officer is a vital source of information to candidates, and I strongly recommend that you touch base with the contact officer, to obtain further information about the role and confirm whether you meet the requirements of the agency in question. Often the designated contact officer (particularly at the senior level) is a member of the selection panel that will be assessing your application, so it can also be an excellent opportunity to make a good first impression.

Even if you are from the same agency, it is still important to touch base, so you can get the information firsthand, rather than obtaining hearsay evidence about the role (unless of course you are currently acting in the position).

Questions you should ask/obtain clarification on:

1. *Unless the vacancy is advertised as 'several positions', then you should ask whether someone is acting in the role and how long they have been acting in the role.*

In the public service sector, many vacancies are temporarily filled by a person from a lower classification level. This allows them to gain valuable experience in a higher position. Unfortunately, some people are left to act in a role for long periods of time (months, sometimes years), so there is a sense that they have a legitimate claim to the role in question.

What this means to you as a candidate, is that you will be competing against another candidate, who already has experience in the position. This often results in the acting person being appointed to the position, as he or she can demonstrate experience, knowledge and success in the position.

While the merit-based process means that the contact officer won't tell you that it is a 'done deal', by asking these two questions, you can determine whether it is worth while competing against a candidate who already has valuable experience in the position.

However, if **you believe you are a very strong candidate and you are interested in the role, then you should still apply.**

Remember, just because someone is acting in the position, does not mean they are effective in the role. Many managers, while not completely dissatisfied, are still open to 'new candidates', in order to improve the overall performance of the work area. I have lost count of the number of candidates acting in the position who have failed to gain a promotion, due to the poor quality of their application, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the selection panel, to justify a decision to appoint the person in question.

However, just don't be surprised, if the person acting in the role is appointed.

2. *If you have to address selection criteria, obtain clarification as to the suggested length of your response per selection criterion, (if a word, character or page limit is not supplied, or suggested)*

On the surface this does not appear to be an important question, but remember you could be competing with internal candidates, that might be writing a full page per selection criteria, against your ½ page or you could unintentionally irritate and annoy selection panel members, who see your 1-page response, when they only required a short-paragraph per selection criteria.

3. Ask questions, so you can learn more about the position and the agency

Use the contact officer as an opportunity to learn as much as you can about the position, so you can decide if you want to work for the department or agency, as well as gain invaluable insight in order to shape your application in a way that meets the agency's requirements, as well as ascertain whether you are suitably qualified for the role. It is not uncommon for job descriptions to be very broad and almost non-descript, so it is important to find out exactly what the day-to-day responsibilities of the role are.

Remember this is your career, so before you invest time in preparing an application, it pays to ensure this is the sort of position you are interested in and that it provides good career prospects.

Some positions in government are great. Others not so great, and this can be reflected in the high staff turnover and need to constantly advertise the position.

Possible questions, depending on the classification level of the application, or whether the contact officer is a member of the selection panel or not, might involve:

- 1. Why is the position open?*
- 2. How often has it been filled in the past five years and what were the main reasons for prior employees leaving?*
- 3. What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this position?*
- 4. What are some of the objectives you would like to see accomplished in the functional area and by the person that fills the position?*
- 5. What are some of the more difficult problems one would have to face in this position?*
- 6. What type of support does the position receive in terms of people, resources?*
- 7. What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?*
- 8. Is there any pending legislation that will affect the role?*
- 9. Are there any mentoring programs or formal training programs?*
- 10. What is the work area's management style?*
- 11. If you are hired, what are the three most pressing issues that would need to be resolved?*
- 12. What are the most important skills and attributes they are looking for in filling this position?*
- 13. How would you describe the agency's culture?*
- 14. What major challenges are currently facing the management team?*

WARNING:

Having contacted hundreds of contact officers over the years, not all designated contact officers are particularly helpful, easy to contact or forthcoming in information. Worse still, some are '**useless**' and even provide misleading information or are simply un-contactable.

While the contact officer must appear to be objective and cannot discourage a candidate from applying, some take their obligations so seriously, that one of my clients was actually encouraged to apply, even though my client had zero qualifications or experience relating to the position and she was applying for a role, several classifications higher than her present role.

What this means, is that the **onus is on you** to question the contact person and discover more about the role, and from this conversation, determine whether you are qualified or not for the role in question

Now this disparaging remark is not aimed at all contact officers. Over the years I have contacted some real gems and if you are lucky, you will contact one that will provide you with ample information and lots of valuable advice relating to the role and the agency's requirements.

It is important to **REMEMBER many contact officers are part of the selection panel and could be your future boss, so even if they turn out to be of little help, make sure you are polite and obliging at all times when talking with them.**

Likewise, some of the contact officers provided are simply HR personnel, who won't necessarily be able to provide you with an in-depth overview of the role.

Documents that need to be submitted

The application pack will outline what documents you will need to submit. Depending on the agency's requirements and whether federal, state, territory or local, the following documents can be part of the application process:

- ~ Application form / application cover sheet.
- ~ Name and contact details of your referees.
- ~ Any supporting documentation (if requested) e.g., copy of drivers licence, academic record.
- ~ Résumé / curriculum vitae (majority require a résumé, but occasionally assessment is done purely on the basis of responses to selection criteria, or behavioural questions and an application sheet collecting your work history).
- ~ Various other documents (apart from your résumé / curriculum vitae) that might be required.
 - o Responses to selection criteria
 - o Statement of claim
 - o Expression of interest
 - o A one or two paged detailed cover letter, outlining why you are suitable for the role.
 - o Standard cover letter (often part of a process that requires responses to selection criteria).
 - o Responses to behavioural questions or short statements e.g. 2 or more work related questions.

Make sure you are sufficiently qualified for the position

Although this has nothing to do with writing a government application, this is **one of the most important aspects to the process** – namely, ensuring that you are sufficiently qualified for the position in question, before dedicating endless hours in preparing a job application.

To understand how essential this is, it is important to go back to how you will get assessed which is based on **merit**, pursuant to *Public Service Act 1999 (Cth)* (and equivalent legislation at state level). This means, if you don't meet the department or agency's requirements' relating to knowledge, experience and qualifications you won't be invited to interview.

Even if you end up being the only candidate applying for the position, (which is unlikely), if you don't meet the bulk of the agency's requirements, the job will simply be re-advertised.

The merit process is by its very nature competitive and your application will be assessed against other candidates, many of whom will be more suitably qualified than you. Depending on the role, panel members will assess anything from half a dozen candidates for complex and highly specialist technical roles, through to 2,400 candidates or more.

Now I have lost count of the number of borderline candidates I have got through to interview and in turn have secured jobs. However, even as a professional writer, with all the tricks of the trade, I still won't accept a commission, when I strongly believe that my client has not got a 'chance in hell' of getting through, as they are clearly not qualified for the role.

In order to ensure that you are sufficiently qualified for the role, you need to understand:

- ~ The classification of the position
- ~ Your suitability against the job (selection criteria/assessment criteria or capability framework).

Classification

All agency positions are **hierarchically organised** from entry level all the way through to the agency head. As you progress up the levels of government you will take on more responsibility with roles becoming increasingly more complex, challenging and demanding the higher you go.

All positions advertised are provided with a classification level, which in turn will determine the salary or remuneration.

As a general summary, **lower-level positions are operational roles** – that is, they deal with day-to-day operational matters of the agency, such as administration processes and providing front line services to clients. These roles also include managing more junior operational staff and managing operational processes, such as the delivery of client services.

High-level positions deal with the 'big picture' and include overseeing managers and shaping the overall strategy of the agency. They can also involve direct contact with ministers and other senior stakeholders within government.

If you are already from the public sector, you would be aware of the hierarchical nature of recruitment. If you are applying for a position at a higher classification than your current position, it is vital to pitch your application at a higher level and use examples relevant to the role in question.

If you are coming from the private to the public sector, you need to understand the various classifications, so that you apply for a role that is suited to your level of experience and qualifications. To assist you in this process, I have provided you with an overview of the classification level for the APS (federal roles) below, which will help you to determine the appropriate level to apply for.

If the classification provided in the advertisement is not listed below, (state, territory and local government applications) another method to determine whether you are pitching at the right level is to review the salary. This method will give you a rough guideline of the level in question. **But be warned:**

- ~ What you receive by way of remuneration in the private sector, might be higher than what you will receive in the public sector for an equivalent role, so rather than focusing just on salary, take a close look at the level of responsibility of the position in question and obtain clarification from the contact officer.
- ~ To meet budget targets some organisations (in particular in the area of social work, or the not-for-profit sector) will advertise a position at a lower classification level, even though the demands of the role are at a higher classification level.

Classification Levels for the Australian Public Sector (Entry level to Agency Head for federal applications and departments such as the Department of Defence, Department of Home Affairs and Australian Taxation Office)

- ~ APS 1 – 2 (General entry level positions, cadetships and traineeships)
- ~ APS 3 – 4 (General administrative, technical, project & service positions / graduate positions)
- ~ APS 5 – 6 (Senior administrators, technical, project and service positions)
- ~ Executive Level 1 – 2 (Senior management positions)
- ~ Senior Executive Level Band 1-3 (Senior executive positions)
- ~ Agency Head

Suitability against the selection criteria

If you don't meet the **mandatory requirements** of the agency, such as possessing a relevant qualification, **you will not be selected for interview.**

You also need to gauge your suitability against the job.

Ways to gauge your suitability include:

- ~ Have you got demonstrable experience and knowledge relating to the majority of duties and responsibilities listed in the position description?
- ~ If the selection or assessment criteria are specific, (e.g., they are asking for someone with government procurement experience), are you confident that you can meet all of them?
- ~ If you don't meet all the selection criteria, assessment criteria, or capability framework, then do you have transferable skills at an equal or more senior level to the role in question?
- ~ If the criteria are generic e.g., communicates with influence, are you confident you can answer these within the context of the role description?
- ~ Are you applying for a position far more senior than your present role?
- ~ Are you weak in more than one criterion?

If you answered NO to the first four points and YES to the last two points, then before you spend countless hours preparing your application, make sure you get more clarification from the agency, to determine your suitability.

I would also recommend not applying for a position, if you are weak in more than a couple of areas, as this will more than likely knock you out of contention.

Remember, the whole process is based on competitive merit-based assessment.

If in doubt, as outlined previously, refer to the contact officer.

A quick note for women: Women can be notorious for not applying for a job, unless they meet ALL the requirements. If you are a woman reading this, it is okay to not meet all the requirements! Keep in mind some requirements will be deemed more important than others by panel members, so apply if you meet the bulk of the qualifications on the job description. It doesn't have to be a 100% match.

Moving from the private sector to the public sector

When determining your suitability for a position, it is important to remember that when coming from the private sector and moving into the public sector, you will be competing against candidates already '*in the system*'. What this means in reality, is that it is important to:

- ~ Determine that it is a **genuine position**, by ascertaining whether anyone is acting in the position or not. Refer to my notes on touching base with the contact officer.
- ~ Understand that if the job requires '**government specific**' skills and knowledge, then it can sometimes be difficult to secure an interview, even if you have comparative skills from the private sector.

For example, you might be a contract administrator from the private sector, but when applying for a contract administrator/or procurement position within government, you will lack specific skills and knowledge, on government policy, procedures and legislation. If this knowledge is **deemed to be important** during the recruitment process and it is listed as an essential requirement or criterion, then it can sometimes be difficult to compete on an equal footing, with internal candidates that already have this knowledge. Also refer to my notes on touching base with the contact officer.

What you need to know about submitting your Application

Agency/departmental requirements vary enormously, **but the number one rule, is to strictly adhere to their requirements.**

- ~ If you email your application to the designated email address, it is not necessary to provide a hard copy of your application via post or courier, unless requested in the application pack.
- ~ If submitting via email, it is not necessary to write an email cover note, unless specified in the application pack. Just simply state the job/reference number and attach and send all the required documents.
- ~ So long as you submit your application online before the closing time, it does not matter whether it is 1-week before the application is due, or it is 4.55pm (and it is due 5pm). If applying for a role in another state, keep in mind the various time zones, so you don't miss the deadline.
- ~ Keep in mind, that sometimes jobs do get withdrawn before the closing date. This is usually a result of budget cuts and there is nothing you can do about the situation. (It is rare, but it does happen).
- ~ An agency (or recruiter) won't necessarily acknowledge receipt of your application.
- ~ The majority of agencies now process all applications online and require candidates to complete applications via online application forms.

Chapter 2

What happens in Practice (the stuff they prefer not to talk about!)

I have just outlined the public service process and in theory how it is all 'supposed to work'. But what happens in theory and in practice are two different things – so I am going to outline key things that you should know about, before applying for a position in the public service sector.

Positions advertised with a person acting in the role

As I have already noted, many positions are temporarily filled with a person acting in the role and in many cases (not always), this person acting in the role will be appointed to the position, as they can provide evidence of success in the job.

Nepotism (it is real)

While the old days of appointments made just within the circles of influence, and the stereotypical public servant with a job for life in spite of gross incompetency are long gone, the reality is that what I refer to as '**residual nepotism**' is well and truly alive in the public service sector. That is, an appointment is made through favouritism, not the values of a competitive merit-based assessment.

This was backed up by the *Australia's Public Service Commission (2018)*, which released a report that stated that 5% of APS survey respondents said they had witnessed another employee engaging in behaviour they considered being corrupt. That equates to 4,900 people, with 64% reporting cronyism and 26% reporting nepotism.

A few selected examples I have encountered over the years:

- ~ Selection panel members reading and critiquing applications prior to the submission date, to ensure their favoured candidate has developed an airtight application. (I know this for a fact, as I have done, this for clients on a few occasions, including for a highly prominent appointment).
- ~ Managers talking directly with the person acting in the position to create a job description and criteria directly suited to the person in question, rather than the position in question.
- ~ The favoured candidate being appointed to the position, regardless of the quality of the application. (Throughout the process there was no intention to appoint an external applicant, but Managers needed to follow protocol and advertise the position).
- ~ I even know of a case where a Manager appointed his lover to the role (and got away with it)!

I consider all this behaviour to be corrupt behaviour and the *Queensland Government Code of Conduct* agrees with my assessment. Because this occurs, I can never guarantee that my clients will absolutely get through to a job interview, even if they are a perfect fit.

Does this mean you should give up on ever gaining a position on the public service sector, or conversely being complacent about your application, if already acting in the position?

In short, the answer is an **emphatic NO!** The majority of positions are, nevertheless, still **genuine positions** and the process is conducted in a way that reflects the values of a competitive merit-based assessment.

For those acting in the position, be warned - I have lost count of the number of candidates who have failed to gain a promotion due to the poor quality of their application or the manager is open to 'new blood'. So, make sure your application is airtight by developing a strong application.

Poor Quality Application Packs

It is a mistake to assume that the selection process articulated in various Acts and Regulations, results in the design of a perfect application pack that provides applicants with relevant and appropriate information, makes the process transparent and results in relevant criteria that match the requirements of the position.

Inadequate Job Descriptions

Not all job descriptions are completely accurate and sometimes there is little or no information on the day-to-day responsibilities of the position. This can make it difficult to understand the role, which in turn can raise problems when writing your application. As noted previously, always refer to the contact officer.

Poorly Developed Selection Criteria /Work Related Requirements

I have lost count of the number of poorly developed selection criteria I have addressed, which simply indicates that the selection panel is not clear about what they are looking for, or they actually don't understand what the various qualifiers or criteria mean. Examples you will encounter include, repetition of skills, personal qualities and knowledge, selection criteria that are difficult to understand, and requirements for a candidate to address a long list of criteria.

Poorly assessed applications

Unless applications are assessed externally, then applications will not necessarily be assessed objectively. While the selection panel's job is to objectively assess candidates and rate each applicant, the reality is that there is poor consistency in rating candidates at both the written application part and at interview.

People judge people and **subjectivity; unconscious biases, prejudices and assumptions are rife in the public service sector** (as in the private sector), in particular if panel members know candidates.

The reality is that politics is 'prevalent' within government organisations and there are the unwritten 'rules' in terms of 'who should', or 'should not be promoted'.

I've known client's that have received feedback from panel members and the same application has been judged completely differently from each panel member, ranging from Very Satisfactory to Poor, for EXACTLY the same response.

Other clients have failed to get through to interview, because they did not demonstrate a specific element of a job. For example, a client came to me with feedback that he had failed to demonstrate the ability to perform on selection panels, so did not get through to interview, even though the job had nothing to do with recruitment and this requirement was NOT even listed in the job description. This happens, when job requirements are

poorly worded, assessment standards are not explicit and panel members are simply biased.

In my experience, the fairest process is when assessment of candidates is conducted externally. That is why I love it when external recruiters are appointed to assess my client applications – as the success rate for my client's skyrockets.

The system is STILL too complex

After writing numerous applications for government positions and after talking to selection panel members and human resource officers within the public sector, the general view is that requiring candidates to address selection criteria is not necessarily the most effective or fair way to recruit staff.

Fortunately, less organisations are using selection criteria, understanding that long applications are totally unnecessary in order to ensure an effective shortlist of qualified candidates.

However, the process still needlessly penalises external candidates who don't have insight into the intricacies of the process and what is required of them.

But it is not only external applicants that struggle with government applications. The *University of Queensland Social Research Centre* conducted a wide-ranging survey of members of the Queensland Public Service, including 66% of members at the AO (Administration Officers) stream.

The survey highlighted that:

"Respondents were discontent with the processes governing career advancement. Concerns centred on the process of adjudicating promotions. A significant majority of respondents deemed the process to be less than transparent, unfair, and incapable of selecting the best candidates".

While there is an element of subjectivity in the respondents polled on the process, after working within the industry for more years than I care to count, I can understand why the process is incapable of selecting the best candidate, since initial selection is always based on how well the candidate presents themselves on paper, rather than a candidate's actual ability on-the-job.

Thankfully this is what this manual is about. Teaching you how to create a knockout application, so you get selected for interview.

Before you proceed to Part Two

- 1. Are you eligible for the position in question, e.g., are you an Australian Citizen or Australian Resident?**
 - a. Do you meet the mandatory requirements of the advertised position?**
 - b. If uncertain about eligibility requirements, have you obtained clarification from the agency?**
- 2. Can you meet the application deadline?**
 - a. If not, have you obtained an extension in writing from the agency?**
- 3. Have you made contact with the designated contact officer to clarify information, obtain an understanding of the position and ascertain whether it is worth applying for?**
- 4. Are you confident you are sufficiently qualified for the position?**
 - a. Is it an appropriate classification level for your level of experience and knowledge?**
 - b. Do you meet the majority of the agency's job requirements, or selection criteria (if required)?**

PART TWO

DOCUMENTATION YOU NEED TO PREPARE

Chapter 3

What you need to know about selection criteria / work related requirements

Selection criteria are also known as **key selection criteria**, **work related requirements** and **assessment criteria**.

They are the list of statements that outline the job specific skills, knowledge and experience that an agency requires you to address in order to be selected for an interview. Depending on the agency, they vary from four through to twenty criteria or more and are used by both the public and private sector to assess a candidate's suitability for the position. **Selection criteria are determined by each department or agency and can include the following:**

Skills

- ~ Organisational Awareness
- ~ Client Service Orientation
- ~ Problem Solving
- ~ Project Management
- ~ Decision Making
- ~ Persuasion and Influencing skills
- ~ Presentation Skills
- ~ Leadership Skills
- ~ Strategic Thinking
- ~ Written Communication Skills
- ~ Business Focus

Personal Qualities

- ~ Cross Cultural Awareness
- ~ Building Productive Networks
- ~ Flexibility
- ~ Teamwork
- ~ Drive & Commitment
- ~ Initiative
- ~ Coaching and developing others
- ~ Ethics and values
- ~ Resilience

Specific Knowledge

- ~ Detailed knowledge and experience in relation to the role in question
- ~ Technical expertise
- ~ Relevant training and up to date in specialist area

*Source "Get it Right – Recruitment Kit for Managers – Capability Cards" – Australian Public Service Commission

A few selected examples of selection criteria are:

- ~ *High-level interpersonal, negotiation, consultation and communication skills appropriate to an environment of change and evolution.*
- ~ *Demonstrated ability to manage staff in line with contemporary human resource management policies, procedures and practices including anti-discrimination, ethical behaviour and occupational health and safety.*
- ~ *Demonstrated ability to work independently, as well as working as a member of a team.*
- ~ *Proven ability to lead a work unit, manage projects, set deadlines, organise resources, supervise assigned staff and meet objectives.*
- ~ *Cultivates Productive Working Relationships*
 - *Fosters internal and external relations*
 - *Facilitates cooperation and partnerships*
 - *Values and harnesses individual differences and diversity*
 - *Guides, mentors, develop and cares for people*

The distinction between essential and desirable criteria

Some agencies make a distinction between **essential** and **desirable criteria**. To meet the agency's requirements, you will need to demonstrate that you can meet the essential criteria, and desirable criteria are just 'bonus' skills and knowledge that an agency is seeking from a candidate. **However, in my experience the distinction between essential and desirable criteria is always 'blurred'** when competition is fierce and the majority of selection panels will favour candidates with both essential and desirable criteria, over those candidates who can only meet the essential criteria.

When addressing the desirable criteria, address them in the same way as you would address the essential criteria, although occasionally, short succinct responses are sufficient. Check with the contact officer as to required length against the desirable criteria, unless this is already stated in the application pack.

Example:

Essential

1. *Knowledge of established work practices and procedures relevant to the work area or the ability to quickly achieve this level of knowledge*
2. *Demonstrated knowledge of office administration and organisational regulations and policies with experience in a busy office work environment in clerical and administration functions*
3. *Demonstrated skills in oral and written communications with clients and other members of the public*
4. *High standards of word processing, spreadsheets, desk top publishing and other appropriate computer applications (preferably the Microsoft Suite)*

Desirable

1. *Experience in an executive office environment where confidentiality, dealing with difficult people and meeting deadlines has been a requirement.*
2. *Shorthand skills*

If you need to address selection criteria, then this document, usually becomes the primary document in the process

If you need to address selection criteria, this is what you need to focus on perfecting. You will be more likely to be invited for the interview if your responses to the selection criteria meet the agency's requirements, even if your résumé would under normal circumstances be considered a liability. But conversely, if you have a brilliant résumé, without adequate responses to the selection criteria, panel members will not select your application. (There are a few exceptions to this general rule, as a panel does have the discretion to accept an application, but it happens so infrequently, that it is vital for you to correctly address the selection criteria).

However, if you need to address selection criteria or assessment criteria within a 2-page cover letter, short statement of claim, responses to behavioural or work-related questions, then your résumé is important, so it will be vital to focus on BOTH documents.

Common Selection Criteria

I refer to Common Selection Criteria, as those relating to occupational health and safety, equal employment opportunity, anti-discrimination and workplace diversity.

Although I've called them common selection criteria, they are now not that common, unless related to the role, such as someone involved in safety, or recruitment. However, I still see them on the odd occasion, in particular at the local council level, or university applications.

Weighting of selection criteria

Some agencies rank the level of importance to the selection criteria by their level of important and assign a **weighting** against each one. If weighting against the selection criteria is **not provided**, then you must assume each has been given equal weighting when addressing the criteria.

Example:

Criteria	Description	Weighting
1	Demonstrated knowledge and experience with or the ability to rapidly acquire knowledge of enforcement/compliance systems/databases associated with public health legislation	10
2	Demonstrated experience in the ongoing development, enhancement application, maintenance and administration of information management systems that support operational practices.	10
3	Well-developed organisational and problem-solving skills relevant to supporting a regulatory environment.	8
4	Ability to project manage various activities and meet deadlines.	8
5	Demonstrated high level written and oral communication and interpersonal skills and ability to work effectively as a team member.	8
6	Demonstrated ability to actively participate in a working environment in line with quality human resource management practices including employment equity, anti-discrimination, occupational health and safety and ethical behaviour	6

Behavioural Questions

Some of the large agencies are using behavioural questions, which need to be addressed against a list of selection criteria.

Example:

Describe a situation where you were required to make a complex or difficult decision that impacted on service delivery or affected a staff member/colleague. What processes did you use? How did you deliver the message?

I cover how to address these behavioural questions in Chapter 13.

Use of Selection Criteria in ranking candidates

Depending on the selection process of the agency, selection criteria will even play a role in your overall ranking during the interview stage, so they could even determine your ultimate success.

The use of Generic Selection Criteria or Public Sector Capability Frameworks

Quite a few agencies use **generic selection criteria**, which apply to all roles, with the only variation relating to technical / specific knowledge required for the role in question.

A large proportion of these generic selection criteria are based on the **Integrated Leadership System (ILS), at the federal level**, which was developed to provide a common language for leadership development in the APS, from APS 1 through to the Senior Executive Level.

At the state level, you will also encounter capability frameworks, with each state having their own variation.

I cover ILS and capability frameworks in Chapter 16 of this Manual.

ILS for Federal

At each classification level, there is a variation, but in brief the ILS framework is as follows (APS 1-6): *

Shapes Strategic Thinking

- ~ Supports shared purpose and direction
- ~ Thinks strategically
- ~ Harnesses information and opportunities
- ~ Shows judgement, intelligence and common-sense

Achieves Results

- ~ Identified and uses resource wisely
- ~ Applies and builds professional expertise
- ~ Responds positively to change
- ~ Takes responsibility for managing work projects to achieve results

Supports Productive Working Relationships

- ~ Nurtures internal and external relationships
- ~ Listens to, understands and recognises the needs of others
- ~ Values individual differences and diversity
- ~ Share's learning and supports others

Exemplifies personal drive and integrity

- ~ Demonstrates public service professionalism and probity
- ~ Engages with risk and shows personal courage
- ~ Commits to action
- ~ Demonstrates self-awareness and a commitment to personal development

Communicates with Influence

- ~ Communicates clearly
- ~ Listens, understands and adapts to audience
- ~ Negotiates persuasively

(*Source – Australian Public Service Commission 2019)

Example of a state capability framework - NSW

For the NSW Public Sector, you have the following components under the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework:

Personal Attributes

Display resilience and Courage
Act with Integrity
Manage Self
Value Diversity

Relationships

Communicate Effectively
Commit to Customer Service
Work Collaboratively
Influence and Negotiation

Results

Deliver Results
Plan and Prioritise
Think and Solve Problems
Demonstrate Capability

People Management

Manage and Develop People
Inspire Direction & Purpose
Optimise business Outcomes
Manage Reform and Change

Business Enablers

Finance
Technology
Procurement and Contract Management
Project Management

Occupation Specific

Occupation/professional specific capabilities

Under each capability group, is a set of behavioural indicators, with a set of statements illustrating the level of behaviours expected at each level. These levels are from foundational to highly advanced. The higher the level, the more descriptive, detailed and difficult, reflecting a progressive increase in complexity and skills required for the position.

These capability frameworks are designed for selection, recruitment and managing performance.

Address ALL the selection criteria

You must address ALL the selection criteria, if it is mandatory to address them!

This might seem like stating the 'bleeding obvious', but a significant number of candidates fail to address one or more selection criteria. By failing to address all the selection criteria, including desirables, it will make it difficult, if not impossible, for the selection panel to assess your suitability against the criteria. The result will be that it is unlikely you will be selected for interview.

If you need to submit a 2-page statement, you also need to make sure you have addressed and met all the selection criteria requirements (directly, or indirectly).

Remember, the **onus is on you** as a candidate to demonstrate your suitability against the selection criteria. It is not the responsibility of the panel members to second-guess your suitability, or to refer to your other documents such as your résumé to check that your qualifications and experience meet their requirements.

They are asking what? (Unravelling selection criteria)

Understanding what evidence, you need to provide against selection criteria is CRUCIAL, so it is essential to understand exactly what level of skill, ability or knowledge is required by the department or agency.

One of the largest complaints I receive from clients is feedback on how complex, convoluting and incomprehensible some selection criteria are. While this is true on some occasions, most of the time it is just a case of understanding exactly what the agency requires before addressing the selection criteria.

Below is a list of common requirements when addressing selection criteria.

'Demonstrated'

You will need to provide tangible evidence and examples that demonstrate your skills, knowledge or ability.

Under no circumstances just state that you have the required skill or knowledge. You must provide concrete examples, which put your experience into context for panel members and focuses on your achievements and accomplishments.

'High level'

You will need to provide tangible evidence and examples to demonstrate that you have a high level of the particular knowledge or skill required.

'General knowledge'

You have a general, broad or basic knowledge of the area. Provide specific examples in which you utilised this general knowledge or provide a very brief outline of your knowledge and understanding and in what context you obtained this knowledge.

'Ability / Potential / Capacity'

Although you might not already possess the actual skills or knowledge, you need to demonstrate your ability to be able to them.

- ~ Briefly outline your understanding of the skills or knowledge required and then provide concrete examples or evidence in which you have rapidly acquired new knowledge and skills in your existing or previous workplace.
- ~ Provide examples or evidence of transferable skills
- ~ If you already have relevant demonstrable experience or knowledge, then provide tangible evidence and examples that demonstrate your suitability under this criterion.

'Mandatory'

You must have this mandatory qualification, experience, admission, licence, professional membership etc. before applying for the position in question. Usually all that is required is a brief sentence stating that you meet the mandatory requirement.

For example:

(Mandatory) Possession of a degree in social work or the behavioural sciences from a recognised tertiary institution

Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours)

The University of Queensland (Australia) - UQ

Graduated 2002

Included completion of a year long thesis, in which I achieved a distinction

'Proven record'

You will need to substantiate any claim with evidence of your record relating to experience, or skill.

'Demonstrated and or ability'

You will frequently run across questions, which require either demonstrated knowledge or skill, or alternatively if you don't have the demonstrated knowledge and skill that you have the ability to rapidly acquire them.

Examples include:

SC 1

Sound knowledge of, or the ability to rapidly acquire a sound knowledge of, legislation and Queensland Police Service policies and procedures applicable to the control, handling and security of exhibits and unclaimed property, and of associated police prosecution and court processes

SC1. Sound knowledge or ability to rapidly acquire sound knowledge of: -

- ~ Public Service Award
- ~ Award for Employees in the Intellectual Handicap Services
- ~ Public Finance Standards; and
- ~ State Purchasing Policy

If you find yourself in the second category, that is you have the ability to readily acquire the knowledge or skill in question, then before you decide to proceed with the application, keep in mind that the process is based on merit and your application will be assessed against other candidates, including internal candidates. If those candidates already have demonstrable knowledge or skills, they might have an advantage over you, which could in turn be detrimental to your application.

Addressing multiple requirements

Many selection criteria are made up of several parts, so you need to ensure that you understand each part of the question and address it with relevant evidence.

When addressing selection criteria, I find it useful to underline the key elements and write a list of the multiple requirements that need to be addressed. I then use this list to check if relevant evidence has been provided against all elements of the selection criteria.

Remember, it is important to understand exactly what all the various parts of the selection criteria are, as it can be detrimental to your overall application, if you don't address all parts with relevant evidence.

Examples:

Well-developed interpersonal skills, including ability to communicate effectively across a range of people, and situations and to work effectively as a member of a team in a human service environment

- ~ You need to demonstrate good interpersonal skills
- ~ You need to demonstrate your ability to communicate effectively to a diverse range of individuals
- ~ You need to demonstrate your ability to work effectively as a member of a team in a human service environment

Demonstrated interpersonal communication skills, including the ability to liaise, network and negotiate with a variety of staff, clients and representatives from other organisations and visitors, in a professional and client-focused manner to generate increased visitation and sales.

- ~ You need to demonstrate communication skills (including negotiation skills)
- ~ You need to demonstrate interpersonal skills (liaising, networking and communicating effectively with a diverse range of individuals)
- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to provide a professional and client focussed service to organisations and visitors
- ~ You need to demonstrate how your communication / interpersonal skills in the points above resulted in increased visitation and sales

Still not clear what they require?

If you are still not clear, then **read the selection criteria in the context of the job description, duties and responsibilities**. It is not uncommon for panel members to create selection criteria that are not clear on the initial read, but once you read what the position entails it often becomes apparent what they are looking for.

Example:

Demonstrated excellence in the delivery of efficient and effective client services, including the ability to manage multiple tasks, research and define facts, display logic, manage conflict, solve problems, make decisions and communicate clearly

There are multiple requirements to this selection criteria including:

- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to deliver an efficient and effective client service
- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to manage multiple tasks
- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to research and define facts and display logic
- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to make decisions
- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly

The selection criterion in question was for an application for a Customer Service Officer and duties included *managing customers' service requests, complaints, enrolments, product information, including general information and professional advice through effective questioning, negotiation and conflict management to ensure customer satisfaction*.

While the selection criterion initially appears quite complex, in fact it simply mirrored the requirements of the position, so it would be a case of simply providing evidence of your ability to work in a similar, if not identical role, in which you provided a high level of customer service, dealt with complaints, researched issues, made decisions and communicated to a diverse range of customers.

Finally, if all else fails and you, or your friends, family and colleagues are unable to decipher the agency's requirements - then obtain clarification from the contact officer.

I cover in detail how to prepare and address traditional selection criteria in Part 3, Chapter 11.

Chapter 4

What you need to know about Résumés, Cover Letters, Application Forms and your Referees

Résumés

As previously noted, if selection criteria need to be addressed, then the document addressing these becomes the primary document in the selection process.

This means that your résumé effectively becomes a supporting document in the process.

However, the majority of agencies and departments now don't require you to submit a separate document addressing selection criteria, so your résumé needs to be effective, so you can get the panel's attention and generate interest. This is particularly true if competition is fierce, with **popular positions receiving more than 1,600 candidates at a time.**

So, unless addressing traditional selection criteria, you need to also focus on creating a highly effective résumé.

These days, an ineffective résumé can be a deal breaker for government.

So, in this updated manual, I've included an additional chapter devoted to résumés, so you can create a 'knock out résumé for government applications.

Cover Letters

Cover letters in government come in all sorts of shapes of sizes these days. Generally speaking, they fall into these broad categories:

1. **A 1-page cover letter that accompanies traditional selection criteria (not common these days)**
2. **A 1 or 2-page cover letter addressing selection criteria, assessment criteria or work-related requirements.**

A cover letter that accompanies traditional selection criteria

If a cover letter is **not specifically requested, then it is not mandatory to submit one.** In fact, many selection panel members disregard any cover letters that are submitted by candidates.

If a cover letter is not required, don't submit one

If a cover letter is a requirement, then use it to compliment your selection criteria and résumé. A good cover letter is perfect for getting the panel's attention when competition is formidable. It is also a great way to describe what you can offer by way of a recruiting solution as well as providing a good insight into you as a person. After all, they will be hiring a human being, not a machine.

Conversely, a poor cover letter that simply provides a perfunctory statement of the position number and invitation to review your résumé and selection criteria responses, suggests laziness and a candidate simply going through the motions of looking for work, rather than providing an outstanding first impression for selection panel members. While it might not be detrimental to gaining an interview, if you can 'woo' selection panel

members into believing you are the consummate professional - then I believe the additional effort is worth it.

1 or 2-page cover letter addressing selection criteria, or assessment criteria

If you are required to address selection criteria, assessment criteria, or work-related requirements within a 1 or 2-page cover letter, I outline this technique in Chapter 14.

These documents can be very different to a traditional cover letter (depending on the agency requirements).

What you need to know about your Application Form

Many agencies require submission of additional information, contained in application forms, which includes both mandatory and voluntary information. You are usually asked these questions via an online form, but on a rare occasion, a cover sheet is required to be submitted.

A surprising number of candidates fail to complete this information, and failure to do so could be detrimental to your application. So **make sure you provide all the information required that is mandatory**

Mandatory information you will need to complete will include details such as:

Personal Particulars

- ~ Family and given names,
- ~ Title
- ~ Preferred name
- ~ Contact telephone numbers
- ~ Postal address
- ~ Citizenship status
- ~ Security status (some jobs involve handling highly sensitive information, which require the applicant to have the appropriate level of security clearance)
- ~ Whether any special requirements if invited to attend an interview (e.g. wheelchair access)

Public Sector Employment Details (If currently employed in the public sector)

- ~ Employee number
- ~ Position title
- ~ Department
- ~ Sector/branch
- ~ Location
- ~ Substantive classification
- ~ Whether you voluntarily accepted early retirement or accepted a severance payment from a government position (state / federal)

Survey data

- ~ How you became aware of this vacancy e.g., Government Gazette, The Australian, Jobs Online

Referee details

- ~ Referee details are usually mandatory

Work History & Education

- ~ Many application forms now request details in regard to your work history and education. This information sometimes replaces submission of your résumé.

Voluntary Information

This information remains confidential and is used by the agency to collect statistics on the recruitment process. **Unless specified, it will not be forwarded to the selection panel to be used during the selection process.** Voluntary information collected:

- ~ Date of Birth
- ~ Gender
- ~ Do you have a disability?
- ~ Are you Aboriginal?
- ~ Whether a Torres Strait Islander?
- ~ Are you a person from a non-English speaking background?

Note: Some roles are designated as specific Indigenous roles, or are part of Indigenous programs, so as part of the eligibility criteria you need to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

What you need to know about your referees

The process requires details of referees to be included. That is name, job title, organisation, and full contact details. If requested, these must be provided in the résumé or application form submitted, **as without referees, your application could be excluded at the discretion of the panel.**

Since referees will always be contacted to ascertain your suitability for the position, (after a shortlist is created), it is imperative to **provide referees that are going to give an honest, constructive and positive account of your performance.**

Keep in mind referees can be part of the assessment process and are not just used to confirm your performance prior to appointment.

Selecting and using referees:

Ensure that your referees have supervised or managed you in a work capacity.

Although traditionally a personal referee would be included, such a practice is long gone, so only include work related referees. Remember, while your best friend, or family member may give you glowing reviews, a selection panel will not take these references seriously.

If you are unable to provide work related referees, then the alternatives are:

- ~ Someone who has supervised you in a volunteer role.
- ~ A former client who can comment on your capacity in the workplace (this is useful if you are transitioning from a business you owned to returning to paid employment).
- ~ If you are a graduate, then a lecturer or tutor who can comment on your academic performance or performance during a practical module.

Get prior permission from your referee. This one might seem obvious, but **countless** candidates fail to contact their referee and ask if it is OK to use them as a referee on an application. To get references, simply ask!

Ensure that your referees are aware of the positions that you are applying for.

That way they have advance notification that they will be contacted in regard to a role and avoids the 'surprise' value.

Try to ensure your referees are going to give you a positive recommendation.

Not all referees are created equal and not all referees will necessarily give you a glowing report. If you are in the position where you can choose your referees, then you should consider the following:

- ~ Are they articulate and have the gift of the gab? Or rather can they really sell you as the right person for the position?
- ~ Are they easily contactable and reliable in regard to returning telephone calls, or completing comprehensive written reports?
- ~ Will they be providing recommendations to other candidates applying for the same role? If so, how will this impact on your application?
- ~ Have you tested the waters and found out whether they will provide a favourable report?

The direct way to find out is to simply call your referee and ask him or her for advice regarding to your next career move, followed by a question relating to what they believe your strengths are in any future role. If the conversation doesn't go well and they can't think of anything positive in regard to your strengths, then you know early on in the piece, that they probably won't be giving you a glowing report.

Also keep in mind when selecting your referees that employers could be liable if they provide favourable report that is unwarranted and results in an economic loss suffered by another company, due to a failure to disclose negative information about a former employee. What this in reality means is that many large corporations instruct employees not to provide comprehensive references.

Remember that vague and noncommittal references and feedback are worse than none at all (e.g., did the job adequately.)

Keep in mind that employing people is an expensive exercise, so for employers it is important to hire people that already have what people call '**social proof**'. That is evidence that you are good and can deliver results, before they hire you. This means it is extremely important that you have good testimonials and feedback from referees that can substantiate your claims made in your application.

Written Referee Reports

Some agencies require the submission of a written report, usually provided through a standard template. To assist your referee in writing these reports, provide your referee with detailed information, including your completed application, together with the application pack providing an overview of the position you are applying for.

Before you proceed to Part Three

- ~ **Do you understand exactly what level of evidence you need to provide against the selection criteria?**
 - **If not, have you obtained clarification from the contact officer?**
 - **Have you interpreted the fit between the selection criteria and the requirements of the position?**
- ~ **Do you need to write an effective résumé, or is this a secondary document, as you need to address traditional selection criteria?**
- ~ **Do you need to write a cover letter, in addition to traditional selection criteria?**
- ~ **If you don't need to address traditional selection criteria, what do you need to submit? For example:**
 - **2-page statement of claim or cover letter?**
 - **A 1,000-word statement, addressing all the general requirements?**
 - **Behavioural-based questions?**
 - **Expression of interest?**
 - **Responses to work related questions?**
- ~ **If referees are required, have you selected the most suitable referees and gained prior permission from them?**

PART THREE

BUILDING A COMPLETE CASE FOR THE SELECTION PANEL

Chapter 5

Meeting the agency's requirements

Before you start writing your application it is important to establish **exactly what the department or agency's requirements are within the application pack.**

Below is an agency checklist for you to work through:

Agency checklist

Documentation Required

- ☐ Do you need to submit a cover letter?
- ☐ Do you need to submit a résumé?
- ☐ Do you need to submit an application cover sheet?
- ☐ Do you need to address selection criteria in a separate document?
- ☐ Do you need to address selection criteria or assessment criteria, within a 1 or 2-page cover letter?
- ☐ Do you need to address behavioural questions (answer specific scenario-based questions)?
- ☐ Is this an online application? If so, do you need to complete the application form online, or attach MS Word documents via email / online?
- ☐ Are there any word/ page / character restrictions for any or all of the documentation?
- ☐ Do you need to provide additional supporting documentation, such as certified copies of your qualifications / licences?
- ☐ Do you need to provide names and contact details for your referees?
- ☐ Do you need to obtain a written report from your referees?

Submission Requirements

- ☐ Application by email accepted or not?
- ☐ Application only accepted online?
- ☐ What is the date and time the application closes?

Position and Agency Requirements

- ☐ Have you established exactly what the overall objectives of the position are?
- ☐ Do you understand the duty statement?
- ☐ Do you understand the selection criteria / assessment criteria / capability frameworks and what knowledge, skills, expertise and experience the agency requires?
- ☐ Have you undertaken a comprehensive research on the department or agency? (See my tips in Chapter 8)
- ☐ Have you spoken to the contact officer?

In Chapter 11, I provide a detailed overview as to how to incorporate agency requirements within your selection criteria.

The unwritten rules

Now you have gone through and established exactly what the agency's requirements are as outlined in the application pack - **you need to establish what unwritten rules might apply in relation to your application.**

Unwritten rules are what I refer to as the established practices of the agency or department, which are not clarified or outlined in the application pack. These are practices that have evolved over a period of time and are more about the agency's in-house methods, than good recruiting practices.

Remember, if you are from one agency and applying for another agency, recruitment practices may be different, including practices relating to the unwritten rules that might apply in relation to your application.

Length of application

Although the majority of agencies now provide word, character or page limits (which is a welcome step in the right direction), quite a few still don't provide clarification as to the exact length required. While some agencies expect and require comprehensive answers, others require only a couple of paragraphs per criteria, even if this requirement is not specifically stated on the application pack.

The solution to this dilemma is to simply clarify the length required with the contact officer before writing your application.

Note: If I'm required to address traditional selection criteria, even at the executive level, the average length I write per criterion is ½ to 1 page. This length is ample, to meet even the complex ICL framework.

Statement of claims / Cover Letters

Many agencies are using 2-page statement of claims or cover letters (either one or two pages), instead of traditional selection criteria. Since this trend is still relatively new (a few years, not a decade or more), there is sometimes confusion as to what these letters should contain.

Some panel members still expect to see detailed evidence against each selection criteria (assessment criteria), instead of a brief overview. Others are happy for a more conventional cover letter approach and this will even be stated in the application pack.

Since confusion still reigns, unless an agency is very specific as to NOT having to meet the criteria within the cover letter, I tend to take a conservative approach and I write a detailed and evidence-based submission. If you have 2 pages, don't stop at 1 and 1/2 pages, use the full 2 pages and get as much evidence as you can into the document, demonstrating why you are qualified for the position.

Chapter 6

Research

Research is a CRITICAL part of preparing your application, as it will provide you with a good understanding of the agency in question, and a sound basis on which to write your application.

Researching the agency

The great thing about researching various public agencies is that the bulk of the information you need is published online. Simply log onto the agency website and gain access to a range of relevant information. Areas I usually review include:

- Overall responsibility of the agency or department (role, structure, mission, vision and values).
- Overall responsibility of the work area in which the position is located (I run a quick search if the organisation has a search function on their website).
- Relevant publications, including annual reports and policy statements.
- Legislation the agency administers (if the selection criteria refer to legislation). I confess to only ever quickly scanning legislation, and a great short cut to understanding the regulatory framework is to either undertake a quick search under Google, or quickly scan the legislation by going straight to the Purpose and Index.

How much research you need to undertake will depend entirely on the position and classification level and your level of knowledge you have relating to the agency.

As a general rule of thumb, at the lower level you will simply need to understand the overall responsibility of the department or agency and work area, which is usually contained in the application pack.

At a higher classification level and for professional roles, you should arm yourself with as much information as possible, particularly if you are not familiar with the agency. This would involve scanning through annual reports and understanding policy statements related to the position in question. Since senior management roles and professional roles contribute to or translate broad strategies, it is vital that you understand the position within the context of the organisational goals and strategies.

Once you are equipped with this knowledge, then you are in a position to use this information to help shape your answers to the selection criteria, or address any statement of claim, as well as providing yourself with a framework for your interview.

Contact officer

As outlined in Chapter One, the contact officer can be a good source of information and will hopefully have knowledge about the position and the competencies required, as well as being receptive to answering all your specific and general queries.

Researching skills and knowledge areas

When addressing selection criteria, **I always research areas relating to certain skill and knowledge areas**, if I don't already have this knowledge. **This provides me with an incredibly powerful framework** to use on behalf of clients. This tool is equally applicable to those trying to get in or get promoted within the public service sector.

As a candidate, you too will find this a useful way to obtain an overview of skills and knowledge areas, which will enable you to shape your government application.

Example:

Core Skill – Communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

In this example, I was able to merge my research on communication processes and principles with the client's direct experience in communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Through this research, I was able to cover all the major issues relating to communicating directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which my client was unable to express.

Youth Social Worker

Selection Criteria 3

An ability to communicate effectively and sensitively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

I have well developed interpersonal and communication skills and have the ability to interact and communicate effectively and sensitively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As Administration Officer at Victoria Police Service, I was responsible for front desk duty. This involved providing advice to a range of clients on a broad range of topics, including communicating directly with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Community, including youths and adults on a daily basis. This experience is enhanced in my current role as Support Worker, at Centrelink, where I provide support to a wide range of clients, from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

When communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, I recognise and respect their different culture and adhere to the following communication processes and principles, including:

- ~ Communicating in a relaxed and non-threatening way (understanding that direct eye contact will not be made).*
- ~ Being mindful that some clients have low literacy and numeracy skills hence the emphasis on oral discussions.*
- ~ Using open or indirect questions when seeking information or explanations.*
- ~ Allowing adequate time for responses.*
- ~ Re-phrasing of questions.*
- ~ Observance of verbal/non-verbal cues or gestures.*
- ~ Using verbal displays as opposed to technical language.*
- ~ Observing gender equity (male may prefer male).*
- ~ Accepting family member/representative for interpretation.*
- ~ Accepting Aboriginal English/Creole as a viable form of communication.*
- ~ Avoiding the use of the name of a recently deceased relative.*
- ~ Avoiding departmental jargon.*
- ~ Understanding that Aboriginal communities are divergent, and no two communities are the same, and that certain core principles (or protocols) should be applied when communicating with the Aboriginal community.*

As you can see from the examples above, research will provide you with a POWERFUL framework, so you can really make yourself sound like the skilled expert you are. However:

- ~ **DON'T plagiarise material** – instead use the information to address specific requirements relating to a skill or knowledge area, without copying the information word for word.
- ~ Under no circumstances use your research to embellish your skills or knowledge **without substantiating these claims with specific evidence of YOUR experience.**

Research material for your job descriptions

In developing claims, you can also utilise material that you find relating to your current and past job descriptions. These can help frame your responses to the selection criteria content, along with your résumé. Sources for job descriptions include:

- ~ Your company's current job description of your position
- ~ Internet postings of job descriptions (job search sites, agency sites and company job boards)

Chapter 7

Understanding Public Service Values

If applying for public sector roles, you need to understand public service sector values and how to incorporate these values into your application. (I cover how to incorporate these values in detail in Chapter 11)

If you are already within the public sector, you would have an understanding of these values, but most candidates fail to effectively incorporate these into their application, in particular if addressing the integrated leadership system, e.g., 'Shows personal drive and integrity'.

If you are new to the process, then it is imperative to understand that as an employee of federal, state, territory and local government, you are not just doing a job, but you will be representing the government. Hence, you will be expected to behave in a way that is appropriate and in line with public service values when carrying out duties and in dealing with the public and fellow employees.

APS Values

The APS Values outlines the values of the public service, from performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner, making employment decisions based on merit, acting with high levels of integrity, delivery of an impartial service, through to promoting employment equity.

The Australian Public Service:

Impartial

The APS is apolitical and provides the Government with advice that is frank, honest, timely and based on the best available evidence.

Committed to service

The APS is professional, objective, innovative and efficient, and works collaboratively to achieve the best results for the Australian community and the Government.

Accountable

The APS is open and accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of Ministerial responsibility.

Respectful

The APS respects all people, including their rights and their heritage.

Ethical

The APS demonstrates leadership, is trustworthy, and acts with integrity, in all that it does.

Source: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/values/>

Code of Conduct

Each agency has a Code of Conduct that must be adhered to. Although Codes of Conduct vary slightly depending on the agency, they all require employees to adhere to principles similar or identical to those outlined at the federal level in the *Public Service Act 1999*.

The **Code of Conduct** requires that an employee must:

- ~ behave honestly and with integrity in the course of APS employment;
- ~ act with care and diligence in the course of APS employment;
- ~ when acting in the course of APS employment, treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment;
- ~ when acting in the course of APS employment, comply with all applicable Australian laws;
- ~ comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given by someone in the employee's agency who has authority to give the direction;
- ~ maintain appropriate confidentiality about dealings that the employee has with any Minister or Minister's member of staff;
- ~ disclose, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with APS employment;
- ~ use Commonwealth resources in a proper manner;
- ~ not provide false or misleading information in response to a request for information that is made for official purposes in connection with the employee's APS employment;
- ~ not make improper use of:
 - o inside information, or
 - o the employee's duties, status, power or authority, in order to gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for the employee or for any other person;
- ~ at all times behave in a way that upholds the APS Values and the integrity and good reputation of the APS;
- ~ while on duty overseas, at all times behave in a way that upholds the good reputation of Australia; and
- ~ comply with any other conduct requirement that is prescribed by the regulations

Source: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/conduct/>

Update relating to Social Media and Code of Conduct: Under the Code of Conduct, you will also find information relating to making public comments on social media. Under the federal framework, public criticism of a minister, agency or department via social media is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct.

The High Court of Australia backed the Government's position up in March 2019, when a former Department worker was deemed to have breached the code by criticising the Department of Immigration and Border Protection on Twitter, even though the tweets were anonymous (*Michaela Banerji Case*).

"It is basically saying that if you take the Queen's shilling, you surrender your rights to participate in the political process" – Mr Anforth (lawyer representing Ms Banerji)

Service Charter

Each department or agency has a Client Service Charter, outlining the agency and staff obligations towards the public.

If the position you are applying for will entail working directly or indirectly with the public or managing an area that works directly with the public, then it is important to read and understand the agency's Client Service Charter.

The principles generally contained in most Client Service Charters at federal, state, territory and local level is as follows:

- ~ Dealing with clients in a friendly, courteous and professional way;
- ~ Being fair, equitable and unbiased in service delivery;
- ~ Responding to enquiries and complaints in an accurate and timely manner (some agencies outline their target response rates);
- ~ Treating information confidentially;
- ~ Taking into account the special needs of clients such as clients in rural, remote and regional areas, the needs of people with disabilities, the needs of people who speak languages apart from English and those from different cultural backgrounds;
- ~ Keeping clients informed about matters that involve them;
- ~ Providing staff that are fully informed and can advise the public; and
- ~ Being accountable and responsive.

Common selection criteria

Common Selection Criteria is the term that I use to describe legislative requirements relating to **Workplace Diversity, Ethical Practices, Anti-Discrimination** and **Employment Equity** and **Occupational Health & Safety**.

For those not within the public service sector, the following information provides you with the basic information you will need to understand, if you are going to work in government.

In the past, you often had to respond to a selection criteria question in relation to these common selection criteria. These days, this requirement is not that common and unless applying for a job that is related to occupational health and safety, or an HR job related to improving diversity within the workplace, you won't have to worry about these concepts within your application.

****** If time is short, skip this information, unless you have to address these within your application. ******

Occupational Health & Safety / Workplace Health & Safety

Occupational Health & Safety legislation and regulation sets out the laws for workplace health and safety. The objective of various state and federal legislation is to prevent is to prevent anyone being killed, injured, or contracting an illness because of a workplace, workplace activities, or specified high-risk plant. This is achieved by preventing or minimising exposure to risk.

Both state and federal legislation places an obligation on every person associated with a workplace to ensure their own workplace health and safety and the workplace health and safety of others. These obligations for staff and managers include:

- ~ providing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment.
- ~ ensuring safe systems of work are implemented, notifying and reporting risks and other hazards.
- ~ assisting management in changes to work practices.
- ~ providing information, instruction, training and supervision.

Workplace Diversity

Workplace diversity is recognition within government policy that acknowledges that diversity of people in the public sector is one of its greatest strengths.

Workplace diversity covers gender, age, language, ethnicity, marital status, cultural background, religious belief, education, family responsibilities and sexual orientation. Diversity also refers to the other ways in which people are different, such as life and work experience, socio-economic backgrounds, and personality.

Employment Equity and Anti- Discrimination

Employment equity is about making sure that workplaces are free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment, as well as providing programs to assist members of various groups to overcome past or present disadvantages. These groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders, women, members from a racial, ethnic and religious minority group and people with a disability.

In the workplace, discrimination is defined as treating someone unfairly or harassing them because they belong to a particular group. Under legislation at both state and federal level, it is against the law for any employer, or employee, to discriminate against a candidate because of their sex, age, colour, race, religion, marital status, descent, political alliances or sexuality.

Sexual harassment is another form of discrimination and it is illegal in all of its form from implicit sexual jokes, inappropriate screen savers, through to innuendo and unwarranted and unwelcome physical and verbal approaches.

Employers and managers are responsible for ensuring that the workplace is free from all unlawful discrimination and to provide equal opportunity for employment, including ensuring that all selection processes are based on MERIT.

Chapter 8

Identifying your skills and achievements

The following chapter is about identifying what YOU have to offer a potential employer. Before you sit down to write your application, it is essential to have a solid framework in place that outlines your skills, knowledge and achievements. This groundwork will allow you to identify exactly what your strengths are and no matter what the application requirements are whether selection criteria, statement of claims, cover letter, or behavioural questions, you have in place relevant information that you can use in your application.

Hard and soft skills

Identifying your hard and soft skills will assist you to identify exactly what you can offer an employer.

Hard skills are occupation skills and areas of expertise, such as project management, event management, office administration and specific technical skills.

Soft skills relate to your personal skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, teamwork, attentiveness to detail, analytical skills and so on.

For example, as a **Marketing Manager** you might possess the following hard and soft skills:

- ~ Workflow management
- ~ Problem solving
- ~ Analytical skills
- ~ Record keeping
- ~ Budget management
- ~ Computer software – MS Word, MS PowerPoint, MS Outlook, MS Publisher
- ~ Relationship building
- ~ Market research
- ~ Digital Media
- ~ Client service management
- ~ Business profile creation and management
- ~ Promotions and sales
- ~ Report writing
- ~ Proposal development
- ~ Advising
- ~ Negotiation
- ~ Supervision of staff
- ~ Mentoring
- ~ Team building
- ~ Performance appraisals
- ~ Branding
- ~ Strategic planning
- ~ Advertising
- ~ Media relations
- ~ Territory management
- ~ Key account management

If you are struggling to identify your skills, I have listed for you a list of both hard and soft skills. The list is not complete (as there are over 20,000 or more skills out there). But this general list will help you pinpoint some of the relevant soft and hard skills you possess.

Hard and Soft Skills Identification Sheet

Use a pen to tick both hard and soft skills that you currently possess.

<p>Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Budgeting <input type="checkbox"/> Internal Main Control <input type="checkbox"/> Office Equipment Inventory <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance Co-ordination <input type="checkbox"/> Purchasing / Stock Control <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Control <input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving <input type="checkbox"/> Record Keeping <input type="checkbox"/> Travel Arrangements <input type="checkbox"/> Time Management <input type="checkbox"/> Workflow Management <p>Business Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Business Profile Creation / Management <input type="checkbox"/> Network Management <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship Building <input type="checkbox"/> Market Research <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity Identification <input type="checkbox"/> Product Research & Development <input type="checkbox"/> Service Delivery <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Advising <input type="checkbox"/> Briefing <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Resolution <input type="checkbox"/> Consulting <input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence <input type="checkbox"/> Delegation <input type="checkbox"/> Instructing <input type="checkbox"/> Interviewing <input type="checkbox"/> Internal Liaison <input type="checkbox"/> External Liaison <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiation Skills <input type="checkbox"/> Public Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Report Writing <p>Computer Competencies</p> <p><i>Software:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> MS Word <input type="checkbox"/> CBA <input type="checkbox"/> MS Excel <input type="checkbox"/> Lotus 1-2-3 <input type="checkbox"/> MYOB <input type="checkbox"/> Page Maker <input type="checkbox"/> Photoshop <input type="checkbox"/> MS PowerPoint <input type="checkbox"/> MS Outlook <input type="checkbox"/> MS Publisher 	<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Accounts to Trial Balance <input type="checkbox"/> Trust Account Management <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping <input type="checkbox"/> Budget Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Budget Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Reporting <input type="checkbox"/> Loan Approvals <input type="checkbox"/> Debtors / Creditors Control <input type="checkbox"/> Taxation <input type="checkbox"/> Auditing <input type="checkbox"/> Computerised Accounting <input type="checkbox"/> Invoicing <input type="checkbox"/> Investigating Discrepancies <input type="checkbox"/> Payroll <input type="checkbox"/> Petty Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Spread-sheeting <input type="checkbox"/> Statistical Analysis <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cash Handling <input type="checkbox"/> Front Line Customer Service <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality <input type="checkbox"/> Rostering <input type="checkbox"/> Stock Control <input type="checkbox"/> Research <input type="checkbox"/> Processing Documentation <input type="checkbox"/> Purchasing <input type="checkbox"/> Despatch / Delivery <p>Health & Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Compliance with Legal Requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Creation of Documentation <input type="checkbox"/> Developing / Implementing Procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Revising Procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Management <input type="checkbox"/> Workplace First Aid <input type="checkbox"/> Work Cover Rehabilitation Claims <input type="checkbox"/> Incident investigation / reporting <p>Human Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Culture & Values Development <input type="checkbox"/> Learning & Development <input type="checkbox"/> Performance Appraisals <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Setting <input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment / Termination <input type="checkbox"/> Supervision <input type="checkbox"/> Team Building <input type="checkbox"/> Workplace Relations
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Hard and soft skills identification sheet continued: -

<p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Business Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Change Management <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Management <input type="checkbox"/> Inventory Management <input type="checkbox"/> Operations Control <input type="checkbox"/> Multi Company Administration <input type="checkbox"/> Performance Control <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Problem Solving <input type="checkbox"/> Project Management <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Control <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Management <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Planning <p>Marketing & Sales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Account Management <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising <input type="checkbox"/> Brand Management <input type="checkbox"/> Channel Management <input type="checkbox"/> Cold Calling <input type="checkbox"/> Prospecting <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor Surveillance <input type="checkbox"/> Cross Selling <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Digital Marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing Strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Merchandising <input type="checkbox"/> Party Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Product Launching <input type="checkbox"/> Promotions <input type="checkbox"/> Proposal Preparation <input type="checkbox"/> Prospecting <input type="checkbox"/> Quotations / Tenders <input type="checkbox"/> Research <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Sales <input type="checkbox"/> Client Development <input type="checkbox"/> Target Marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Territory Management <input type="checkbox"/> Value Added Sales 	<p>Secretarial / Reception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Answering Correspondence <input type="checkbox"/> Data Entry <input type="checkbox"/> Dictaphone Typing <input type="checkbox"/> Fielding & Directing Telephone Calls <input type="checkbox"/> Report Generation <input type="checkbox"/> Minutes <input type="checkbox"/> Sourcing suppliers <input type="checkbox"/> Management of Diary <input type="checkbox"/> Typing / Word-processing <input type="checkbox"/> Shorthand <input type="checkbox"/> Stationary Reconciliations <input type="checkbox"/> Operation of Office Machinery <p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conducting Training <input type="checkbox"/> Establishing Training Needs <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing Written Material <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Training Manuals <input type="checkbox"/> Group or Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching <input type="checkbox"/> Developing Training Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Learning and Development <p>Personal Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to work under pressure <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptable <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical skills <input type="checkbox"/> Astute <input type="checkbox"/> Attention to Detail <input type="checkbox"/> Composure under Pressure <input type="checkbox"/> Conceptual Skills <input type="checkbox"/> Creative <input type="checkbox"/> Disciplined Approach <input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurial Skills <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility <input type="checkbox"/> Proactive <input type="checkbox"/> Results Orientated <input type="checkbox"/> Strong Business Acumen
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

You can also use this sheet to identify relevant hard and soft skills, when undertaking **specific activities**, such as managing projects, or implementing organisational change. This will help you shape specific answers when addressing government application requirements.

Compile a career portfolio

A comprehensive career portfolio catalogues your professional history. This portfolio is a perfect way to chronicle your experience and knowledge, for any government application.

A pivotal part of the application process is this groundwork; including compiling examples and making sure you have all the information on hand to write the application.

I never commence an application with a client until I'm satisfied, I have all the information that is required.

Information to include:

~ **Education & Qualifications**

- University / TAFE / Secondary School, (only include details as to your Secondary Schooling if you have recently left school)

~ **Seminars and conferences relevant to your career**

~ **Language Skills**

- Fluent and business vocabulary

~ **Personal profile / management style**

~ **Expertise, strengths, specialisations**

~ **Technical skills / computer competencies**

~ **Professional experience**

- Profile of company, including distinguishing characteristics, (e.g. largest manufacturer of steel in Australia)
- Job title and scope of accountability (list ALL areas of responsibility)
- Key challenges
- Contributions and achievements (list all areas in where you helped the organisation solve problems, improve systems, save money, and so on)

~ **Community Involvement / Voluntary Roles**

- Profile of organisation, including distinguishing characteristics
- Role title and scope of accountability (list ALL areas of responsibility)
- Contributions and achievements (list all areas in which you helped the organisation solve problems, improve systems and so on)

~ **Professional Memberships**

- List all current professional memberships

~ **Evidence of High Performance**

- Performance appraisals
- Written reference reports
- Any documentation received by a third party complimenting you on your performance – e.g., email or letter from client thanking you for the service performed
- Awards

~ **Publications and Presentations**

Identify your achievements - your key to a sizzling government application

The majority of clients I work with fail when it comes to talking about their achievements, with the usual response being, 'but I just do the job'. While this response might suffice in social circles where you don't want to 'brag' or 'big note' yourself, it simply **won't cut it when drafting your government application.**

When I talk about achievements, I am not talking about that promotion, or pay rise you negotiated, or even successfully completing a degree with first class honours, while you juggled both family and work commitments. While these are all worthy achievements and you should be proud of them - they are focused on YOU, not the employer.

When I talk about achievements, I am really talking about the contributions you have made and the results you have achieved for present and past employers.

For example, you reduced operational costs by 34%, you implemented an occupational health and safety strategy that reduced workplace injuries by 40%, or you created a new filing system that eliminated wasted time in searching for misfiled documents.

Like all employers, government panel members are interested in 'what's in it for me', also known as WIFM. That is, they **are after a 'recruiting solution'** – a staff member that can make a solid contribution to the work area or overall strategy of the agency, as well as a candidate who meets their requirements (skills, experience and personal qualities). They are not interested in YOUR career aspirations and are too preoccupied in assessing a bundle of applications, to worry about YOU as an individual - **in fact they're 'downright indifferent about you'.**

However as soon as you start talking about tangible achievements in your application, you are setting the stage for showing them why you just may be the best candidate for the position. This will turn a previously indifferent panel member, into someone who is thinking that the work area and agency needs someone like you to fill the position.

To show you how important it is to talk about your accomplishments, I have attached two examples of a candidate applying for a senior logistics and warehousing role.

Candidate One

In this role, I managed the warehouse and distribution of a fast high-volume, made-to-order business. The operation delivered in excess of 35,000 pallets of product each month to over 1,500 customers. Whilst maintaining profitability, my objective was to rationalise the transport providers, increase the service levels and decrease the cost, whilst changing the culture within the dispatch department.

Candidate Two

In this key logistics role, I was involved in the management of the warehouse and distribution site, delivering in excess of 35,000 pallets of product each month to over 1,500 customers, with over 95% of product made-to-order. In this role I successfully spearheaded changes required to rectify previous poor management of the site.

Key Contributions and Results:

- ~ *Met challenge of increasing service levels, decreasing costs and changing culture, within 3 months.*
- ~ *Rationalised warehouse layout in line with production profile, reducing the overtime required to complete output by 50%.*
- ~ *Spearheaded variable cost control measures and ensured adherence to operating budgets.*

- ~ Remedied inaccurate inventory record entry, allowing for lower re-order points.
- ~ Significantly reduced pallet losses, through introduction of procedures, documentation and control software, allowing for an auditable trail of all relevant pallet movements.
- ~ Reduced local transportation costs by 10% per annum, through effective management of fleet contract tender.
- ~ Dramatically improved management of local sub contract delivery fleet, through new service level agreements and ongoing performance appraisals.
- ~ Saved 15% in freight costs, through effective management of the tender of the regional delivery network.
- ~ Reduced overtime of staff by 30% and provided a better loading service, through detailed analysis of transport cycle times and staff rosters.

Now, put yourself in the shoes of the selection panel member and make up your mind as to which candidate convinces you of their knowledge and track record as an employee. Most likely, you chose Candidate Two, and if you haven't guessed it already, Candidate One and Candidate Two is the same person. Candidate One was a first draft written by the client, Candidate Two included a full list of achievements, as a result of asking the client targeted questions relating to their achievements, utilising the CAR technique, (which I have outlined for you below).

Hopefully I've convinced you how talking about your achievements can transform you from an average candidate to a 'knock out' candidate, I now want you to spend time and energy thinking about the various contributions you have made in all your relevant roles.

Yes, I know even as I say this, your eyes are glazing over and you might be struggling to think of even one tangible achievement. But believe me – everyone contributes, either directly or indirectly to an organisation. **To help you brainstorm your achievements,** I have listed some general questions below, outlining areas in which you as an employee may have contributed to an organisation. I have made the focus on achievements that reinforce qualities required for the public service sector.

- ~ Have you saved money for an organisation?
- ~ Did you build organisational capability?
- ~ How have you solved a specific or major problem?
- ~ Are you a key 'trouble-shooter'?
- ~ Have you delivered on an intended outcome?
- ~ Did you introduce new procedures that improved operational processes?
- ~ Did you improve the overall management of a functional area?
- ~ What did you accomplish for your clients?
- ~ Were you selected for any significant projects and what were the outcomes of these projects? Benefits / cost savings / improved processes
- ~ Did you manage the same or greater amount of work than your predecessor?
- ~ Are you more efficient than most?
- ~ Did you exceed expectations of clients?
- ~ Did you exceed expectations of management?
- ~ Have you improved customer relations?
- ~ Did you develop and implement long term planning initiatives?
- ~ Did you develop partnerships with external stakeholders that were beneficial to the organisation?
- ~ Did you increase productivity or efficiency within an organisation?
- ~ Did you achieve a result within a tight budget and or time constraints?

- ~ Did you develop, manage, implement or contribute to any major changes within an organisation?

Using the CAR technique to uncover your achievements

One method I employ to uncover achievements for clients is to get them to use the CAR technique.

CAR is the acronym for:

- ~ **Challenge you encountered**
- ~ **Action taken**
- ~ **Result from your action**

This is almost identical to the selection criteria model CAR, but the C is short for Challenge, rather than Circumstances, as outlined in the selection criteria CAR model in Part IV, Chapter 11.

Examples using the CAR technique

Example One:

Challenge

Poor or non-existent quality procedures in place

Action

Empowered a small team to document the current practices, then the same team wrote procedures to what needed to be done. Each team member then validated the relevant procedure for their machine and implemented the quality procedures.

Results

The entire team embraced the procedures. The cost of complaints for that site reduced from an average of 12% per year to 2% for the first year and 1.2% for the balance of the next year. Moved the mindset from quality checking to quality assurance.

Example Two:

Challenge

The operational staffs were not clear as to areas of responsibility and accountability. No performance measures in place at any level

Action

Set clear role definitions, position descriptions and set clear expectations of results for each role. Implemented the framework for rewarding the achievers and managing the under achievers

Results

A framework was in place, so all employees knew what was expected from the role and what the acceptable outcome was. Goals and targets were set and agreed upon, then reviewed formally on a regular basis. It allowed career development and success to be rewarded and poor performance to be managed. This in turn removed all subjectivity from the workplace career development and bonus systems. It consolidated the site to common goals and delivered success.

You can see by using the CAR technique, you can start framing some very strong achievements that can be effectively utilised in both your résumé and responses to the selection criteria.

Overlay your accomplishments on the agency's needs

Now that you have a detailed overview of your achievements and hard and soft skills, the next step is to spend time thinking about how your experience and skills relates to the position you are applying for.

Draw a line down the middle of a page and one side, list the agency's needs, and on the other side of the line, list all your hard and soft skills and contributions that prove you can do the job. This exercise will help you to pinpoint your assets that the agency requires and will help shape your application.

The department needs:	The experience and skills I have:

Chapter 9

Developing a case for core selection/assessment criteria

Core Criteria

Core criteria are what I refer to **job requirements that you will find in the overwhelming majority of applications.**

To assist you in developing a case for addressing these key requirements within government, I have listed some hard and soft skills as well as a range of questions to guide you when thinking about your various actions and accomplishments, relating to these requirements, or selection criteria. This list is not exhaustive but provides a basic framework that can be applied to almost any role, from entry level to the senior executive level.

Please note - these leading questions are not industry or role specific, but general prompts about various activities when developing responses to core selection criteria. By activities, I mean specific projects, tasks, assignments, responsibilities and actions in a role.

When developing your responses to the selection criteria, ensure they are specific to the job in question.

Developing a case for Management

Generic Skills:

- ~ Management of staff
 - o Culture development
 - o Performance appraisals
 - o Supervision
 - o Delegation
 - o Team building
 - o Training & development
- ~ Change management
- ~ Resource management
- ~ Effective communication skills
- ~ Establishing priorities and direction
- ~ Budget management / financial management
- ~ Implementation of best practices
- ~ Quality control
- ~ Ensuring compliance with legislation, policy and organisational procedures
- ~ Supporting senior management / executive

Questions

- ~ *Did you manage a budget within a functional area?*
- ~ *Was the budget cut, and how did you meet that cut?*
- ~ *What were the biggest cost-savings you implemented?*
- ~ *How did you manage resources within a functional area?*
- ~ *Did you manage the implementation of change and if so, how?*
- ~ *Did you manage staff? If so:*
 - o *How did you delegate responsibility?*

- *How did you ensure staff compliance with relevant policy, work procedures, regulations and legislation requirements?*
- *How did you develop a team culture?*
- *Did you conduct staff training?*
- *Did you restructure job descriptions?*
- *Did you improve staff morale?*
- *How did you keep staff informed?*
- ~ *Have you got any management qualifications?*
- ~ *What improvements did you make to a functional work area?*
- ~ *How did you manage key decisions, relating to staff, resources and the implementation of processes?*
- ~ *Did you develop and implement new management processes?*

Developing a case for Teamwork

Generic Skills:

- ~ Effective communication skills (e.g., listening, consulting, communicating relevant information to team members)
- ~ Support and sharing of views, ideas and resources
- ~ Relationship building
- ~ Strong interpersonal skills
- ~ Nurturing relationships with team members
- ~ Understanding of your role within the team framework

Questions:

- ~ *How have you supported your work colleagues?*
- ~ *Do you readily participate in team meetings, if so, what was your participation and the outcome?*
- ~ *Have you trained and supported new or current staff members?*
- ~ *How do you communicate with team members?*
- ~ *How have you contributed to a team's success, for example, meeting targets and key performance indicators?*
- ~ *What is your role within the team and are you aware of other team members' responsibilities and use this knowledge to enhance your work practices?*

Developing a case for Leadership

Generic Skills:

- ~ Strategy development
- ~ Strategy implementation
- ~ Identification of current key issues and trends
- ~ Development of plans and policy
- ~ Research
- ~ Political astuteness
- ~ Analytical skills
- ~ Conceptual skills
- ~ Communication skills (guiding, leading, communicating relevant information, persuasion, negotiation of resources).
- ~ Long term problem solving
- ~ Vision and direction

Questions:

- ~ *Have you contributed to the overall vision and goals of a work area or organisation?*
- ~ *Do you promote a work area and organisations visions and goals?*
- ~ *How do you strategically develop plans and strategies? What was the result of these plans and strategies for the work area and organisation?*
- ~ *Did you resolve an entrenched problem for the organisation?*
- ~ *How have you demonstrated your leadership skills?*
- ~ *Did you develop any long-range planning initiatives?*
- ~ *How have you ensured that your team contributes effectively to organisational / agency priorities / requirements / direction?*
- ~ *How did you communicate this vision to others?*
- ~ *How have you delivered a vision, or work goal?*

Developing a case for Interpersonal Skills

Generic Skills:

- ~ Inter-departmental communication
- ~ Internal and external liaison
- ~ Relationship building
- ~ Networking
- ~ Effective team player
- ~ Guiding and mentoring
- ~ Effective communication skills (consultation, listening, adapting communication methods to suit various audiences)

Questions:

- ~ *Did you develop relationships with external organisations? If so, what organisations and how did you nurture these relationships?*
- ~ *Did you participate in internal committees, if so what committees and how did you nurture these relationships?*
- ~ *Did you participate in external forums?*
- ~ *Did you supervise staff? If so:*
 - *How did you motivate individual staff members?*
 - *How did you confront challenging performance issues?*
 - *How did you let colleagues know that they were valued?*
 - *How did you guide and coach other staff members?*
- ~ *Did you provide front line client service? If so, how did you meet and exceed client needs and expectations?*
- ~ *Did you improve rapport with internal or external stakeholders?*
- ~ *Are you sensitive to the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders?*

Developing a case for Communication Skills

Generic Skills:

- ~ Active listening skills
- ~ Adapting communication to suit an audience
- ~ Advising
- ~ Briefing
- ~ Conflict resolution
- ~ Consulting
- ~ Correspondence

- ~ Counselling
- ~ Debriefing
- ~ Delegation
- ~ Instructing
- ~ Interviewing
- ~ Public speaking
- ~ Mediation
- ~ Negotiation
- ~ Report Writing

Questions:

- ~ *Have you negotiated effectively with individuals and or organisations?*
- ~ *What written documentation have you provided and how have these impacted on an organisational, client, or functional area? (Reports, memorandums, correspondence, briefs)*
- ~ *How have you established formal and information communication channels to keep external or internal stakeholders informed?*
- ~ *Have you made public speeches?*
- ~ *In what way have you influenced decision maker or colleagues through your communication skills?*
- ~ *How have you made a strong written or verbal case to resolve a problem, implement a new procedure or make changes to a work area or organisation?*
- ~ *How have you adapted your communication skills to meet the needs of different stakeholders? (junior staff, clients, senior management, individuals whose second language is English, socially diverse individuals)*

Developing a case for Organisational Skills

Generic Skills:

- ~ Workflow management
- ~ Use of IT to streamline processes
- ~ Monitoring progress
- ~ File management
- ~ Project management

Questions:

- ~ *Did you develop any new procedures to speed up repetitive tasks?*
- ~ *How did you handle an increase in work demand, without additional assistance?*
- ~ *Are you more efficient than most? If so, why and how are you more efficient?*
- ~ *Did any projects you worked on increase productivity, or efficiency of an organisation or work area?*
- ~ *How did you deal with difficult time constraints?*
- ~ *How did you use technology and software to enhance work practices?*
- ~ *How do you respond to changing priorities?*

Developing a case for APS Values

When addressing APS values within your application, **it is not sufficient to simply state that you adhere to them**, you must:

- ~ Outline your understanding **AND**
- ~ Provide concrete examples of how you have applied these in the workplace

Addressing APS values directly

You will find some advertised positions require you to address APS values directly, from entry level, right through to the senior executive level. If so ensure that you provide ample evidence of both your understanding and how you have specifically applied the values in the workplace.

A few examples of Selection Criteria relating to these values:

- ~ *A standard of personal integrity as required by the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service*
- ~ *Exemplifies personal drive and integrity (From the ILS Framework)*
 - o *Professionalism and probity*
 - o *Risk-taking and personal courage*
 - o *Action orientation*
 - o *Resilience*
 - o *Self-awareness*
 - o *Commitment to personal development*

Addressing APS values indirectly

You will sometimes come across an advertised position that does not require you to address these values directly. If this is the case, you can incorporate supporting evidence of your ability to act to a high level and with high standards of personal behaviour, by addressing these values **indirectly**, throughout your application.

Examples:

- o If addressing a question about teamwork, briefly outline how you value the diversity of ideas and values of other team members and adhere to EEO and Anti-Discrimination principles.
- o If addressing a question relating to management, provide evidence on how you managed performance in line with public sector values, promoted equity and diversity and ensured a high service delivery in line with the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders.
- o If addressing a question about providing a high level of customer service, provide evidence of your ability to deliver the service in line with codes of conduct and service charters e.g., fair and impartial advice, being responsive, and maintaining confidentiality.

Questions for APS Values

- ~ *When did you need to make tough business decisions that were in the best interests of the organisation?*
- ~ *Was there a conflict of interest and how did you resolve it?*
- ~ *In what way have you supported differences in work colleagues, management and clients?*

- ~ *Have you been a member of a selection panel committee and how did you apply the principles of merit?*
- ~ *How do you ensure that the work area/operations are conducted professionally and to a high standard?*
- ~ *How do you ensure adherence to legislation, and organisational policies and procedures?*
- ~ *How have you ensured staff members adhered to professional standards, codes of conducts and service charters?*
- ~ *Have you taken steps to ensure unacceptable behaviour was stopped within your work area? (e.g., inappropriate jokes, inappropriate screen savers, bullying behaviour)*
- ~ *How have you fostered a culture of accountability, rather than blame?*
- ~ *How have you set high expectations for yourself and others within a workplace?*
- ~ *Do you readily undertake professional development courses to enhance your performance?*
- ~ *How do you ensure adherence to client service charters?*

Before you proceed to Part Four

- ~ Do you understand exactly what the requirements of the agency are?
- ~ Have you undertaken research of the agency relevant to the classification level and requirements of the position?
 - ~ What is the overall responsibility of the work area and position?
 - ~ What are the relevant publications and policy statements related to the work area and role? (Reports, policy, legislation, codes of conduct etc.)
- ~ What are your hard and soft skills relevant to this and other roles?
- ~ Have you compiled a comprehensive portfolio that catalogues your career?
- ~ What are your achievements? ***** (**STOP!** Do not precede any further until you have a list of tangible achievements, or rather CAR's, as this exercise is VITAL).

PART FOUR

CREATING A KNOCKOUT RÉSUMÉ

Chapter 10 **Steps to creating a knockout Résumé**

If you have read Part I through to Part III carefully, you have now completed all the essential groundwork relating to understanding the process and identifying your skills and achievements.

Résumés / Curriculum Vitae have become increasingly important in government applications, in particular if you don't need to address traditional selection criteria (e.g., you need to write a 700-word pitch, a 2-page cover letter or statement of claim, rather than a response to long and complex selection criteria).

However, if you need to address selection criteria, now it is time to start working on the **MOST IMPORTANT DOCUMENT IN THE PROCESS**: the document providing your responses to the selection criteria. If you are short on time, focus on perfecting your selection criteria responses **FIRST** and then come back to this chapter, if you have time.

Overview

In government, most résumés are between 2 and 5 pages long. Sometimes a selection panel will specify a page length (which you need to adhere to) otherwise, longer résumés are completely acceptable. But avoid that 6 plus page long document, no matter how experienced you are, as you will turn readers off and dilute your message.

In government, your résumé/CV should include:

- **Personal details**, your name, contact email address and phone number. Don't include personal details such as marital status, age or photograph.
- **Profile or career summary**, providing a quick snapshot of what you offer.
- **Education, qualifications and professional development** (professional development refers to course, workshops, additional training).
- **Work experience**, in chronological order, starting with the most recent and working back.
- **Other experience**, such as volunteer work.
- **Additional details if relevant to the position** such as professional affiliations, languages, advanced computer competencies.
- **Referee details**, if the online application form is not collecting these details and referee details are required.

To simplify the process for you, I'm going through step-by-step on what should be included in your résumé.

Step 1: Contact Details

Don't include your work email address, unless applying for an internal position.

Make sure your email is a nice conservative one.

Don't use an email if it has your birth date included – e.g. john.peters68@hotmail.com

Only insert your work telephone number, if your job search is not confidential, you have a private voice-mail system that cannot be accessed by others and a receptionist won't screen your calls before they get to you.

Step 2: Profile

Within the profile, highlight how you meet the needs of the employer. Information that

you should consider including are:

- Your core competencies relating to the position
- Number of years' experience in the sector
- Skills relevant to the role
- Highlights of your achievements and accomplishments
- Management style
- Any affiliations and professional organisations
- Relevant language skills

Note the emphasis is on **competencies that are relevant to the position**. This is really important, as the most effective profiles are the ones that provide a summary of all the skills and attributes that you possess and that meets the needs of the employer.

Please note that it is not necessary to include all of the information above and keep the profile concise.

An example of a very short profile followed by Career Highlights Section.

By diving quickly into achievements, not only were core competencies successfully covered, but the opening also elicits interests from the reader. This is one of my favourite tactics when positioning clients for a specific position.

Capital Works / Project Management

Executive Manager, with 15+ years' experience in the delivery of infrastructure and capital work programs.

- **PROJECT MANAGEMENT:** Vast experience in leading capital projects, including meeting the demands of 8 different complex capital projects, across different stages and documentation, with capital budgets up to \$25M.
- **TEAM LEADERSHIP:** Highly experienced in leading teams, including leading up to 30 staff as Manager Strategy and Governance, University of Queensland.
- **INNOVATION:** Achieved multiple awards for innovative practices that have slashed costs and improved sustainability, including the highly prestigious **International Sustainability Award, 2013** (supported by UN Environment) and the **University of Queensland Award for Excellence (Sustainability) 2017**.

Step 3: Skills

Provide a short list of skills that you offer, so panel members have an instant understanding of what you can bring to the organisation.

Avoid at all costs generic soft skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills (they seriously don't add any value).

Be **SPECIFIC** and make sure the skills list matches the job you are applying for (VITAL).

In this example list below, the expertise and skills section mirrored the exact requirements of the position. You will note a complete absence of skills such as communication and interpersonal skills.

EXPERTISE & SKILLS:

Learning & Development Coordination: Generalist HR Advice: Recruitment: Strategic Planning: Project & Events Management: Risk Management: Staff Induction: Executive Secretarial Support: HR Data Analytics: Industrial Relations: Governance: Quality Assurance: Payroll: Administrative Support Services.

Step 4: Employment History

Consider providing a short overview of the company, if the company is not well known.

Make sure you put your experience into context for employers and recruiters, such as the number of staff you supervised, size of budget, scale of projects.

Ensure the bulk of your focus is on achievements, not long lists of duties and responsibilities.

Achievements should always be included and should be a major factor highlighted in your résumé.

Steps to Writing Your Employment History	Example One
1) Write a compelling overview that summarises what you did and puts the experience into context	Invited by Fox Group Pty Ltd to lead this start-up. Fox Group is delivering emergent and proprietary technologies, products and services for the global agriculture sector, including improving quality and decreasing the cost of production and transportation. Reports: 5 Managers Budget: \$2M per annum
2) Explain any challenges you faced (leave out, if you had no challenges)	Confronted upon commencement with a flagship project that had stalled, with zero capital and struggling operations. Successfully led the agricultural start up through substantial growth through evidence-based roadmaps, action and operational solutions.
3) Quickly summarise any duties and responsibilities. Keep this very tight and to the point. Avoid a long list of duties.	Point of contact for technical 'troubleshooting' across a range of work, which involved complex accounting regimes. Delivered effective advisory services and used rainmaking skills to boost networks and links with major global clients.
4) List all of your achievements Notice how much space is utilised to talk about achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VISION & STRATEGY: Created short and long-term vision and strategy for the organisation, successfully putting into place the steps needed to turn a vision into a reality, including establishing KPIs. • CAPITAL RAISING: Overcame challenge of raising capital, including promoting the business to potential investors; pitching to high wealth individuals; hosting international investors and nurturing contacts across

stockbrokers. Successfully raised capital across 50 shareholders.

- **GROWTH & PROFIT:** Grew the company from zero to full commercialisation locally and internationally within just 4 years.
- **PARTNERSHIPS & JOINT VENTURES:** Forged effective relationships across Universities, Scientific Institutions, Engineers, Local and International Suppliers for the commercialisation of the technology from warehouse and transportation of agricultural products around the globe.
- **OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS:** Identified multiple areas for improvement, including across financial administration and compliance. Implemented structure to meet the operational needs of a rapidly expanding company, dramatically improving financial management, taxation structures and cost management.
 - Led the financial strategy and budget and executed financial accountability the Company.

Steps to Writing Your Employment History	Example Two
1) Write a compelling overview that summarises what you did and puts the experience into context	Secured a highly competitive position within FOM, an intergovernmental organisation working with displaced persons, refugees and migrant workers
2) Explain any challenges you faced (leave out, if you had no challenges)	With a highly complex compensation program, quickly developed a framework to reach out and identify potential claimants, distribute claim forms across numerous languages, provide claimant assistance and ensure payment of eligible claimants across the globe
3) Quickly summarise any duties and responsibilities. Keep this very tight and to the point. Avoid a long list of duties.	Coordinated major aspects of the Forced Labour Compensation Programme, co-funded by the German government, German Banks and Swiss Banks Settlement fund, compensating more than 73,000 elderly Sinti and Roma, Jehovah's Witnesses, disabled and homosexual victims of the Nazi regime.
4) List all of your achievements Notice how much space is utilised to talk about achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drafted and negotiated contracts for humanitarian and social assistance and negotiated directly with donors to secure support on a compliance framework and the distribution of US\$65M of funds. ▪ Author of multiple reports to program donors and made direct presentations to donors. ▪ Delivered a framework that ensured effective monitoring of the programme and delivery, ensuring compliance

requirements were successfully met across multiple jurisdictions, including Eastern and Central Europe.

Now it's your turn! **Start crafting your employment history!**

Step 5: Education & Qualifications

Include Education & Qualifications on the first page, if you are a new graduate, or have recently completed qualifications that add real value – e.g., Master of Business Administration.

Otherwise list your education & qualifications on the last page of your résumé / CV.

If a graduate, you can add details, such as:

- Academic Excellence (if you received any high distinctions, distinctions or academic honours or awards).
- Sports at University
- Research projects

You might think about omitting dates, if your qualifications are more than 10 – 12 years old and you don't have more recent qualifications (just so you don't give the impression that you have not continued to pursue training and qualifications to keep abreast with change).

If you don't have any qualifications, don't worry, just leave this heading out and focus on your life education and focus on your achievements.

Step 6: Optional Extras

Career Objective: A standalone Career Objective is useful if you fall into the following categories:

- You are changing career
- You are a recent graduate with limited or no paid experience
- You are applying for a support position
- You are a highly specialist expert

Personal Information: Generally, the rule is you should leave personal information out of a résumé / CV including date of birth, marital status, health status, interests and hobbies. However, ignore this rule, if these personal attributes will enhance your application. For example:

If an Indigenous person and the job required an Indigenous person, then include this information.

Include interests, if this is relevant to the job. For example, if you were going for a conservation traineeship, listing your hobby of looking after wildlife will be beneficial to your application.

Associations: Include current membership to associations that will enhance your credibility as a professional or expert in your field. Leave out very old memberships.

Voluntary Experience: If you have limited experience, or you want to further emphasise relevant skills to the position, then include your voluntary experience. Treat your voluntary experience in the same way as you would treat employment experience, i.e., the key focus should be on your achievements.

Publications/Articles/Presentations: If applying for an academic, medical, or scientific position, you will need to create curriculum vitae, which will include a

comprehensive list of publications, articles and presentations.

If you are not applying for an academic, medical or scientific position, but you are a published author, or have made presentations at key conferences, then list the publications/conferences that will be relevant to the employer. If you have a comprehensive list, consider providing these in an annexure to your résumé.

Awards: If you have an award, then this is great content to put into your résumé. Some basic rules:

- If the award is limited to community awards, or academic honours from way back, then position this section towards the end of the résumé
- If the award related to work, or was a highly prestigious award (e.g., from the Queen, or Government), then you should highlight this on the front page of your résumé.
- If the award is quite old, then a trick for presenting this accomplishment, without making it sound like it is out-dated, is to include it, without providing the date on which you received it.
- If it is an award that you achieved within the workplace, such as Customer Service Award, then include this information within the work history and highlight this information in bold.

Step 7: Edit, Edit, Edit!

Everyone can use a second set of eyes to look over their work before putting it out into the world, so have a friend or colleague look it over.

Refer to Chapter 11 that provides a detailed section on proof reading and getting outside eyes to look at your application.

Additional Tips and Recommendations

Use the first-person narrative: Avoid using the third person narrative and use the first-person narrative, omitting the 'I'.

Before: I achieved an honours degree

After: Achieved an honours degree

Always claim ownership of activities: By writing in the first person and claiming ownership of activities, you will strengthen the information provided.

Acronyms / Abbreviations and Jargon: Make sure you avoid jargon, or acronyms that are specific to your current position and are not applicable to the new position you are applying for. It is OK to use acronyms, if these are related to your industry and a common term understood by everyone.

Don't repeat the same words over and over: Avoid repetition of words as they lose their impact and dilute the overall message.

Understanding the difference between a curriculum vitae and résumé

Some applications request the submission of a curriculum vitae rather than a résumé. The literal Latin translation of curriculum vitae means 'the course of one's life' and is used by candidates within the areas of science, education/academia or medical communities. CVs within these professions, incorporate detailed information relating to professional activities, including journal articles, research, scholarships and publications.

However, in Australia the term CV is used interchangeably with résumé. Panel members are referring to the same document, just using a different term to describe the document.

Résumé Checklist

- ☐ **Incorporate the key skills and attributes relevant to the position within your profile.**
- ☐ **Provide tangible achievements that demonstrate how the department/agency will benefit from appointing you. Highlight these achievements within your résumé.**
- ☐ **You can utilise the CAR or STAR methodology and incorporate those examples most relevant to the position. For example:**
 - ~ Instrumental in ensuring organisational compliance with Workplace Health & Safety
 - o Designed policy and established and implemented training and induction systems for personnel.
 - o Lifted company performance, with independent third-party audit showing quantifiable 96% overall improvement in performance in 2015.
 - o Company awarded Health, Safety, Security & Environmental (HSSE) Small Contractor Award for the State 2015.
 - ~ Initiated business development strategy aligned with strategic goals, including identification of business opportunities and acquisitions to enable expansion of services
 - o Facilitated expansion of training programs, at over 10% per annum for previous 3 years
 - o Overhauled ad hoc services, with successful consolidation of services for both draft survey and terminal operations
 - o Reached significant growth targets
- ☐ **Write relevant job descriptions that focus on the tasks of your prospective role. For example, if the role you are applying for is focused on project management, and your current and previous roles entailed many aspects, including project management, cull some of the less relevant information, and make the project management element the key focus within your résumé.**
- ☐ **Substantiate soft skills outlined in selection criteria, such as communication and interpersonal skills, with evidence in your résumé, For example:**

'Instrumental in negotiating new contracts with suppliers.'
- ☐ **Incorporate your understanding of relevant policy and legislation, if you have already worked within this framework. For example:**

'Implemented policy, legislation and regulations relating to the Taxpayer's Charter, the Compliance Model, Income Tax Acts, GST Acts and Excise Act, successfully translating legislation to inform decisions and support organisational objectives.'

PART FIVE

ADDRESSING TRADITIONAL SELECTION CRITERIA

Chapter 11

Addressing selection criteria

In this section, I provide you with the 7 steps to creating sizzling responses to selection criteria. By following all 7 steps you will end up with high impact statements that will easily distinguish you from the rest of the candidates and will greatly enhance your chances of getting through to interview.

Many of these steps also apply to expressions of interest (EOI), statements with word limits and 2-page cover letters. So don't skip this chapter!

Step One – Stick to the basic rules (or face elimination)

Before you get started addressing selection criteria, **I have listed some basic rules you must adhere to.** Some of these have already been highlighted within this manual, but I have repeated them to reinforce their importance in the process.

Rule One

You must address ALL the selection criteria! This might seem like stating the 'bleeding obvious', but a significant number of candidates fail to address one or more selection criteria. By failing to address all the selection criteria, including desirables, it will make it difficult, for the selection panel to assess your suitability against the criterion or criteria. That will make it unlikely you will be selected for interview.

Remember, the **onus is on you** to demonstrate your suitability against the selection criteria. It is not the responsibility of the panel members to second-guess your suitability, or to refer to your other documents such as your résumé to check that your qualifications and experience meet their requirements.

Rule Two

Do not EVER refer the selection panel to your résumé, or any other part of the document when addressing criteria. Instead, treat every criterion as a separate short essay and if necessary, repeat information. Remember, each criterion is scored and weighted and a selection panel member won't have the time, or the inclination to search through your documents trying to locate the paragraph, or information you were referring to.

For example:

- ~ Instead of 'refer to résumé for list of relevant courses', insert a heading under the criterion and list the courses.
- ~ Don't state, 'refer to selection criterion 3' – simply repeat the relevant information contained in selection criteria. Alternatively develop another evidence-based example that can be utilised specifically for the criterion.

Rule Three

Make sure you address all parts of the criterion. Too often candidates fail to address all parts of the criterion, hence significantly weakening their application.

For example:

SC 6

Ability to maintain effectiveness and motivation and the ability to respect and accept requests, directions and workforce change from supervisory staff with a positive team-oriented attitude

This criterion requires an evidence-based examples relating to:

- ~ Ability to maintain effectiveness and motivation on the job
- ~ Ability to support and respect management relating to directions and organisational change initiatives – combined with a shared enthusiasm and positive team attitude relating to these directions and organisational change initiatives.

Rule Four

Make sure you follow the department or agency's directions, relating to page limits, word or character counts, layout and presentation. Not all departments or agencies list these requirements, but if they do, make sure you follow their directions **EXACTLY**.

Step Two – Develop a framework

Before you start diligently writing your application, it is important to plan an outline, of what you are going to write under each criterion. **By providing this framework at the very beginning, you will not only save time, but you will ensure that you provide the most relevant examples and information for each criterion.**

This framework is where you start incorporating the groundwork you covered in Part III, relating to your hard and soft skills, achievements, career portfolio and outline relating to developing a specific case for core and common selection criteria.

Below I have provided you a working example, so you see how a relevant framework could be structured, before writing an application.

Example:

Name: Katrina Williams

Position: Customer Service Officer / APS3

Overall responsibility

To provide customer centred services that will enhance the quality, consistency and scope of information and enrolment services that will better meet the needs and expectation of existing and prospective students, staff and clients at TAFE.

To provide customer services, which are sales focused on the available program and course information.

Portfolio of experience, skills and achievements for Katrina Williams

Hard and soft skills

- ~ Email distribution
- ~ Internal mail control
- ~ Office equipment inventory
- ~ Record keeping
- ~ Travel and accommodation arrangements
- ~ Problem solving
- ~ Advising
- ~ Written correspondence
- ~ Instructing
- ~ Conflict resolution
- ~ Range of software skills, including MS Word, MS PowerPoint, MS Excel
- ~ Bookkeeping
- ~ Budget keeping
- ~ Investigating discrepancies
- ~ Cash handling
- ~ Supervision of Staff
- ~ Training of staff
- ~ Data entry
- ~ Dictaphone typing
- ~ Use of office equipment
- ~ Fielding and directing telephone calls
- ~ Shorthand
- ~ Filing
- ~ Gathering quotes
- ~ Maintenance of management diary
- ~ Function's coordination
- ~ Generating reports

Education and Qualifications

- ~ Advanced Course in MS Excel
- ~ Advanced Course in MS Word
- ~ Certificate II Office Administration

Professional Experience

Office Administrator – Department of Health

Scope of accountability

- ~ Reception duties
- ~ Correspondence
- ~ Reports
- ~ Rosters
- ~ Events management
- ~ Collection and distribution of mail
- ~ Banking
- ~ Reconciliations
- ~ Overtime returns
- ~ Maintenance of personnel files

Achievements

- ~ Developed new filing system
- ~ Developed new templates for standard correspondence
- ~ Successfully coordinated large event involving 1,000 participants

Retail Manager – K-Mart

Scope of accountability

- ~ Supervision of staff
- ~ Rostering
- ~ Reconciliation of tills
- ~ Customer complaints
- ~ Merchandising
- ~ Housekeeping
- ~ Sales
- ~ Inventory management

Achievements

- ~ Increased staff retention rates
- ~ Increase in profit recorded in section
- ~ Email letter complimenting me of service provided by customer

Administration Officer – Training Section at Customs

Scope of accountability

- ~ File management
- ~ Advanced data entry
- ~ Coordination of payments
- ~ Stationery reconciliations
- ~ Procurement of training equipment
- ~ Telephone enquiries
- ~ Correspondence
- ~ Secretary of lead trainer and four training units
- ~ Budget management

Achievements

- ~ Developed all the procedures and policy relating to the administration of the work area
- ~ Developed templates
- ~ Outstanding performance appraisal received by Team Leader

Selection Criteria Responses – Framework

Note: I have used the STAR model, when providing the framework. The STAR model is outlined in Step Three.

SC 1

Proven ability to work as a collaborative and effective team member and actively contribute to the team's success ensuring the service expectations of a diverse and dynamic organisation are met

- ~ STAR 1
Provide outline of role in working with team members at the Department of Health, including training of new Administration Officer, working with the Workplace Health and Safety Officer, offering help to staff in regard to information and rosters, resulting in an effective and timely service.
- ~ STAR 2
Provide example of the management of a major event at the Department of Health, including working other team members. Outcome of ability to work effectively with team resulted in a successful delivery of function for over 1,000 people.
- ~ Insert comment contained in performance appraisal regarding ability to support colleagues and management.

SC 2

Ability to identify and convert business opportunities (sales) including the ability to meet sales targets and build customer loyalty and confidence.

- ~ STAR 1
Provide comprehensive outline of role as Retail Manager at K-Mart including the provision of high standards of customer service and building customer loyalty. Highlight increased profit in section, while Retail Manager.
- ~ Incorporate email received from customer, relating to the high level of service received, while working at K-Mart.
- ~ STAR 2
Provide a short outline relating to transferable skills gained in the Department of Health, including managing customer service requirements, providing information and ensuring up-to-date and accurate information was provided.

SC 3

Demonstrated ability and high-level skills in the use of computer systems, software packages, and web-based technologies.

- ~ STAR
Outline software skills, utilised in both the Department of Health and Customs, including use of electronic computer systems, database entry, utilisation of MS Word for reports and memorandums and the successful development of MS Word templates, which streamlined office processes at Customs
- ~ Insert relevant qualifications
 - o Advanced Course in MS Excel
 - o Advanced Course in MS Word

- Certificate II Office Administration

SC 4

Demonstrated ability to prioritise and plan workflow to achieve outcomes with identified timeframes while displaying initiative within a team environment to ensure excellence in customer service.

STAR 1

Outline role as Administration Officer, including detailing administrative tasks undertaken in order to meet team members' requirements, and using initiative in regard to the successful development of all work procedures, which ensured all tasks were met within allocated time frames.

STAR 2

Provide example of working with team members at the Department of Health, including coordination of complex rosters, providing assistance and information, contributing to team meetings and providing a high level of customer service at the reception desk.

Step Three – Use a selection criteria model

The key to addressing selection criteria is to provide an **evidence-based response** to each of the selection criteria. Although it is evident to you that you possess these relevant skills and knowledge, you need to convince panel members that you actually possess them

It is vital you avoid writing statements that claim you meet the selection criteria, without providing any evidence.

Consider the following *Before* and *After* example. The *Before* example simply makes a statement, without any examples to demonstrate the soft skill relating to communication and interpersonal skills. The *After* example provides tangible evidence of communication and interpersonal skills and more importantly, how this soft skill contributed to the company.

Before

I have excellent communication and interpersonal skills, evidenced throughout my long career. At all times, I communicate appropriately, write clearly and ensure that I get on with people from all walks of life.

After

I have excellent communication and interpersonal skills, including communicating effectively with people from all walks of life, through positive lines of communication.

In my role as Markets & Purchasing Manager, I was responsible for sales and business development for new markets at S.A. McKenzie. Within this role, I nurtured a wide range of contacts and strategic alliances with clients and publishers. This included responding to feedback from clients to improve service delivery, taking the time to talk and listen to others, and communicating information in an effective and timely manner. As a result of my ability to communicate and establish effective working relationships, I successfully recorded the largest sales growth within the company, with up to 45 new customers within a 12-month period, including domestic and international institutions.

The *Before* example simply states that the candidate has the relevant experience. The *After* example provides the panel with a tangible example.

A large number of agencies suggest using a particular selection criteria model when addressing selection criteria. The two major selection criteria models utilised across agencies at federal, state and local level are **STAR** and **CAR**.

You will also come across other selection criteria models, such as **PAR (Problem, Activity, Result)**, or **SAR (Situation, Activity and Results)**.

If an agency specifies a particular selection criteria model, then it is **IMPERATIVE** that you use that model when addressing the selection criteria.

If a particular selection criteria model is not specified in the application pack, then use one or more of the models, as they are all an excellent way of ensuring that you write an evidence-based response to selection criteria.

As a professional selection criteria writer, I always use a model as a general basis in which to build a complete case for the selection panel, (whether I need to respond directly to selection criteria or not) as they provide a framework in regard to ensuring an **evidence-based response, with a focus on contributions and achievements** (as they all end with a 'R' for results).

My favourite model is the CAR methodology.

STAR Methodology

STAR is the acronym standing for:

- ~ **Situation**
- ~ **Task**
- ~ **Actions/Activities**
- ~ **Results**

Example:

Selection Criteria

Demonstrated ability and high-level skills in the use of computer systems and software packages, in particular MS Word.

Situation (Outline of context - I usually briefly outline the job title and organisation)

As Workplace Health and Safety Inspector and Workplace Health and Safety Senior Inspector at the Department of Industrial Relations – Workplace Health and Safety, I was responsible for the investigation of workplace accidents.

Task (Outline of your overall responsibility, task/project)

In this role I conducted audits, including management audits, provided assistance in relation to the prosecution of breaches of the Act, along with general training and mentoring of staff members. In undertaking these responsibilities, I used word processing skills on a daily basis. I also streamlined operations, through the effective utilisation of IT to enhance working practices. This involved:

Actions/Activities (How you did it)

- ~ *The effective development of template documentation relating to investigations and prosecutions. This included the development of a wide range of documents in MS Word to ensure the accurate processing of investigations and to ensure all relevant information was recorded*
- ~ *The development of templates in MS Word for summary of facts and records of interview*
- ~ *The development and maintenance of a state-wide briefing notes system in MS Word*
- ~ *Development and implementation of a computer merge format program for breach reports*
- ~ *Extensive use of MS Word for drafting memorandums and other correspondence*
- ~ *Development of IT processes to ensure accurate recording for investigation prosecution records*
- ~ *Training of inspectors in relation to MS Word and the utilisation of new templates and briefing notes developed*
- ~ *The extensive utilisation of departmental specific software Genscope*

Results (What were the outcomes / achievements / contributions?)

As a result of my software and computer skills I developed an effective template structure for the organisation in investigations and prosecutions, which significantly streamlined operations and eliminated duplication in effort. I also successfully developed and implemented a computer merge format program for breach reports, which significantly enhanced operations/time management, with a reduction in the process from four days to half a day.

CAR Methodology

CAR is the acronym standing for:

- ~ **Circumstances**
- ~ **Actions/Activities**
- ~ **Results**

Example:

Selection Criteria

Capacity for effective management to optimise the achievement of agreed goals (Head of Department – Information Communication Technology)

Circumstances (Context and overall responsibility)

As Acting Head of Department (Technology), a key part of my role has been the management of the timely delivery of the stated goals and vision for the ETRF, including the ICTs for learning strategy, with view to integrate ICTs into the Education Queensland curriculum, teaching and learning. (Information and Communication Technologies for Learning – School Information Kit 2017 – 2022).

Actions/Activities (How you did it)

Key management responsibilities have included ensuring the integration of ICTs into subject and curriculum areas, ensuring teachers have the necessary capability to effectively engage with and use ICTs in productive pedagogy and ensuring teachers and students have access to ICT resources and support. This has involved everything from collaboration with teaching and technical staff to ascertain the strengths and weakness of ICT across all curriculum areas, a review of ICT resources, coaching staff on ICT initiatives that utilised productive pedagogies, through to collaborative review on how best to integrate ICT in the education Queensland curriculum.

Results (What were the outcomes / achievements / contributions?)

ICT Benchmarks that I have achieved through the effective management of resources, include:

- ~ **ICT Support** - Development of an online maintenance register, which allowed for better utilisation of technical support, including the provision of guidelines for turn-around time for repairs and support and requests for assistance or advice
- ~ **Learning, teaching and the curriculum** – The successful development of ITC laboratories (1 new laboratory and 2 revamped laboratories) and the opening of laboratories at lunchtime, enabling students to source ICT tools and resources.
- ~ **Connectivity** - Development of an intranet, allowing for school wide access to relevant information and resources and providing a platform for self paced individual learning packages for students and in-service package for teachers
- ~ **ICT Infrastructure** – (a) Enhancement and upgrade of existing standard operating system, which streamlined the system and enabled the school to introduce new software and teaching packages (b) Established network infrastructure for Annex, including the delivery of an online network, which allowed for the development of innovative pedagogy.

As you can see from the two examples, **there is very little difference between the two models, with the C from the CAR model**, being the combination of Situation and Task as outlined in the STAR model.

Please note: It is unnecessary to use the subheadings that I have inserted into these examples. The headings used in these examples are for your benefit, so you can see how in practice these selection criteria models can be utilised.

Emphasise the 'R' of the STAR and CAR

I know I am starting to sound like a broken record and the **achievements mantra** is becoming boring, but remember, the difference between an average application and an impressive application is your ability to provide tangible evidence of your achievements and contributions.

At a lower classification level, demonstrable achievements could propel your application to the top of the interview pile.

At higher classification levels or when going for a promotion, your demonstrable achievements are mandatory, as they are tangible proof of your ability to deliver at a more senior level.

As a professional selection criteria writer, achievements and contributions are so important that if a selection criteria model is not specified by the agency, I sometimes shift achievements to the opening paragraph, before outlining my client's actions in the role.

Likewise, if a very strict word limit applies at the executive level, I try to use a 75/25 ratio, with 65% of the focus on achievements and outcomes and 35% on putting the experience into context for panel members and outlining actions.

Opening and Concluding Statements

Opening and concluding statements are not crucial, but if a word, page or character limit does not apply they can add the finishing touches to your application, reinforce your understanding of the role, as well as reiterate for selection panel members, why you are qualified for the position.

There are also certain agencies that recommend that candidates use opening and closing statements and if this is the case then you will need to include them when addressing selection criteria.

Opening Statements

The most common opening statement is a **belief statement** briefly outlining your understanding of the agency's requirements or your belief that you meet the agency's requirements. The belief statement is then followed with evidence.

As with all opening statements, keep it brief and succinct, make sure it is always followed by concrete evidence and ensure that they mirror the requirements of the selection criteria.

The key to opening statements is to keep them really brief. You don't want your application filled with belief statements that don't provide evidence.

Example One:

An example of an opening statement that simply states that the candidate meets the agency's selection criteria.

SC 1

Demonstrated high level specialist knowledge of the structure, dynamics and key issues associated with elite level coaching and the development of elite and talented athletes for success in the national and international sporting arenas

I have extensive specialist knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues relating to the structure, dynamics and key issues for elite level coaching and I have provided strategic high-level advice relating to coaching and sports science.

Evidence then inserted, outlining specific examples (namely using a STAR or CAR).

Concluding Statements

Concluding statements can be used to reaffirm your potential to perform successfully in the new role, by providing a quick summary as to how your skills match those required or stating how you plan to carry out the role. (If using the latter, ensure that you have a very clear understanding of what the department or agency requires from a candidate)

Example One:

I am confident that my detailed understanding of literacy, associated pedagogies and assessment and reporting will enable me to provide strategic advice to stakeholders in order to implement Literacy – the Key to Learning Framework 2020.

Example Two:

As Program Manager, I will lead staff in relation to ensuring they change their focus, when managing the implementation of ICT reforms, in line with organisational requirements and strategic direction.

Inserting written material to support your response to the selection criteria

You can strategically use written material from third parties that comment on your performance within your application. Such material can include:

- ~ Written references
- ~ Performance appraisals
- ~ Emails received from clients that comment on your high performance and ability to deliver services in a timely and competent fashion.

When using this kind of material, don't go overboard and incorporate the full report, email or reference. Use short, sharp and succinct extracts that back up the evidence you have already provided.

Example:

This selection criterion related to professionalism, integrity and drive. I simply inserted a section of a letter of thanks my client had received in relation to a voluntary activity that reflected well on these attributes.

I voluntarily assisted Internal Investigations Branch by performing covert duties during a targeted integrity test. In a letter of thanks, the Officer in Charge, Internal Investigations Branch stated: *'Mr Smith's professional approach, enthusiasm and adaptability contributed to the effectiveness of the operation. His efforts reflected creditably on himself'.*

Inserting qualifications to support your response to the selection criteria

To provide further evidence and to reinforce your suitability against various selection criteria, include qualifications, or professional development courses relevant to the criterion at the end of your statement, if you have not already incorporated the information within a STAR or CAR.

Example:

For this team leader role, I simply inserted relevant qualifications, after the STAR examples relating to management of staff.

KSC 2

Substantial skills in managing and motivating a production team by setting challenging targets and providing technical support to ensure results are achieved.

Evidence Provided

Further information to support application

First Line Supervisor (Qualification) Course - Training and Development Section

Modules included:

- ~ Planning
- ~ Organising
- ~ Leadership I
- ~ Leadership II
- ~ Leadership III
- ~ Controlling

Recruitment and Selection Accreditation Workbook Human Resources

How to juggle an example (STAR / CAR) around, so it meets a number of selection criteria (Trade Secret Revealed)

One of the most difficult elements in addressing selection criteria is coming up with relevant selection criteria examples to use within the application. However, it is not that difficult once you know the various generic elements of all the major selection criteria, such as management, teamwork, interpersonal skills, communication skills, through to organisational skills (Refer to my notes on these generic elements in Chapter 9).

Below is an example of how you can use ONE example of a project or achievement and transform that example, so it easily fits the requirements of a number of selection criteria, from communication skills, team work etc. just by re-focussing the generic elements to meet the particular selection criteria in question.

Example STAR:

Situation: As Marketing Officer *Task & Activities:* I managed the development of a global intranet site for the project finance group, to ensure all global offices had key information relating to the business development and marketing of the group. **Results:** Improved global bid processes and information across complex organisation.

Selection criteria examples using this one STAR above

Selection criteria example - Communication & Interpersonal Skills

At White & Case Limited Liability Partnership, I worked as Marketing Officer for a specialist group of partners involved in global project finance. One of my key responsibilities was to manage the development of a global intranet site for the project finance group to enhance communications within the group.

Pivotal to this position was the ability to communicate clearly, respectfully and appropriately and this involved engaging with senior management and global partners on content, facilitating full cooperation from central business development, direct negotiations with the director of IT, including SQL scrip, persuading and working with law clears in the production of the documentation and proofreading of the site, through to writing content for the site (100 pages in total), ensuring ambiguous and clear content.

As a result, significant contributions were made to the business group, including:

- Streamlining the global bid process, by ensuring improved brand consistency across all offices and the avoidance of duplication in effort, with a library of bid precedents previously unavailable to business development and partners.
- The provision of timely access to job leads, which resulted in White & Case winning new business.
- Global access to information bibles and templates, which significantly improved the international information service at White & Case, with 24-hour access to the vital material across all offices in the Americas, Latin America, Asia, Indian Sub-Continent, Middle East and Europe.

Selection criteria example - Team work

As Marketing Officer at White & Case Limited Partnership, I successfully worked with other team members in relation to providing support services to global partners.

A specific example of my teamwork was during the development of a global intranet site. Here, I worked collaboratively with other team members within the firm, including partners, central business development, the director of IT, through to paralegals and law clerks. This involved providing feedback to team members, participating in team meetings to discuss the project, including meeting with the director, guiding and working with paralegals and law clerks, including supporting their work, ensuring collaboration with the central BD team, through to providing ongoing support to senior partners, including technical and information support.

Here my understanding of the wider team and ability to draw on the strengths of other team members ensured the successful completion of the site, which made a significant contribution to the business development and marketing of the group, including:

As a result, significant contributions were made to the business group, including:

- Streamlining the global bid process, by ensuring improved brand consistency across all offices and the avoidance of duplication in effort, with a library of bid precedents previously unavailable to business development and partners.
- The provision of timely access to job leads, which resulted in White & Case winning new business.
- Global access to information bibles and templates, which significantly improved the international information service at White & Case, with 24-hour access to the vital material across all offices in the Americas, Latin America, Asia, Indian Sub-Continent, Middle East and Europe.

Same outcomes as used under selection criteria example – communication & interpersonal skills.

Selection criteria example – Computer Competencies

At White & Case Limited Liability Partnership, I worked as Marketing Officer for a specialist group of partners involved in global project finance. One of my key responsibilities was to manage the development of a global intranet site for the project finance group. This included:

- The extensive use of Excel, to manage online spreadsheets relating to various files managed by the firm. This included using my knowledge of entries formulae, and functions, menu commands, the use of excel function keys and the use of keystroke shortcuts.
- I used email extensively for all correspondence relating to the development of the site.
- I used WordPress to develop the pages for the intranet, including links, use of images, tables, validating forms, use of templates, integration of a database, webpage layout, character and paragraph formatting, through to learning basic HTML.
- I extensively used MS Word, including management of files, graphics and diagrams, documentation security, creation of templates, through to the utilisation and use of keystroke shortcuts.

As a result of my computer competencies, I was able to successfully complete the site, w made a significant contribution to the business development and marketing of the group including:

As a result, significant contributions were made to the business group, including:

- Streamlining the global bid process, by ensuring improved brand consistency across all offices and the avoidance of duplication in effort, with a library of bid precedents previously unavailable to business development and partners.
- The provision of timely access to job leads, which resulted in White & Case winning new business.
- Global access to information bibles and templates, which significantly improved the international information service at White & Case, with 24-hour access to the vital material across all offices in the Americas, Latin America, Asia, Indian Sub-Continent, Middle East and Europe.

Same outcomes as used under selection criteria example – communication & interpersonal skills and teamwork.

As you can see from the examples above, you can simply change the actions, while using a CAR or STAR example, so they match the specific requirements of the selection criteria.

**** BEYOND the STAR or CAR MODEL ****

I have just outlined how to use the STAR or CAR model to successfully address selection criteria. **These are great methodologies, and you should use these methodologies if specified by the agency.**

But if you are confident about your application writing skills, you can use more advanced methods to provide evidence in your application.

Portfolio Methodology

If the criterion relates to demonstrable experience or knowledge, then a great way to provide demonstrable evidence is to simply provide a comprehensive portfolio of your work. This works really well if you are a professional, such as a Project Manager, Road Engineer, Information Technology Professional and Contract Administrator etc.

By listing a portfolio of work, you provide ample evidence of your demonstrable knowledge and experience. This can also be an effective method, if you don't have to directly address selection criteria. See the example below:

SC 5

Demonstrated ability, and a record of achievement in successfully management and coordinating significant projects within a large complex and changing organisation, and in a commercial environment

I have **substantial** experience relating to the coordination of significant projects within large complex organisations, including change management and associated methodologies and managing project budgets of up to \$20m. A few selected examples include:

- ~ As **Senior Project Manager Strategic ICT Projects, at Government Treasury**, Information & Communication Branch, I developed/implemented the project mandates for various strategic projects, including CITEC, in-sourcing, server virtualisation and printer consolidation. Successfully reduced TCO over five years by 50%, or \$600k.
- ~ As **Manager at ICT and ICT Infrastructure at Government Treasury**, I developed the project briefs for various strategic projects. Successfully identified cost savings in the vicinity of \$500,000 per annum in hardware and maintenance.
- ~ As **Senior Project/Programme Manager Strategic Projects for Government Treasury**, I successfully implemented an enterprise-class data centre; developed branch and organisational level IT strategies and wrote Treasury's technology roadmap. Outcomes included saving the organisation \$250,000 through successful negotiations with the vendor providing desktop hardware.
- ~ As **Portfolio Manager, Corporate Projects within the Project Agency**, I evaluated a portfolio of 48 projects and made recommendations as to which projects to pursue.
- ~ As **Principal Project Manager at Mains Work**, I successfully implemented a 4.5-million-dollar project/SOE and new desktop and server hardware (for DELL as the main contractor) throughout the business and across the state of Queensland, with minimum disruptive impact on the business.
- ~ As **Project Manager for Exxon Energy**, I led a project relating to the implementation of an end-to-end IT solution and a consolidated, new Australia wide Internet service infrastructure. Key outcomes included realising annual benefits of \$500,000 through improvements to productivity, operational efficiency, security and workflow and savings of \$200,000 through the development and implementation of an automated server installation process.

Punchy STARS

One way to overcome the limitations of the STAR or CAR methodology is to provide a list of punchy STARS. This method can be particularly useful if you have a word or page limit and is often a good method if you need to complete a short statement of claim. The advantages of such a method, is that you can really highlight everything you have achieved in a very succinct manner. See the example below:

Analytical Capability

Throughout my professional career, advanced analytical skills, problem solving and the ability to translate complex issues into coherent solutions have been paramount. Selected demonstrable examples from within FIU include:

- **I successfully worked on a project that identified asset replacement needs over a five-year period.** During this project, I discovered inconsistencies with the data. I resolved this issue through advanced analytical skills, including the thorough analysis of data and identification of assets and I made written recommendations to management, which successfully resolved key issues relating to data cleansing and compliance.
- I have successfully **conducted audits** including FIU Asset Revaluation Reserve and treatment of FIU revalue disposal assets and treatment of FIU held for sale assets. This has involved identifying irregularities, research (evidentiary material, non-financial information, legislation/regulations) and interpretation and collating and analysis of a range of information. My advanced analytical skills have ensured the appropriate identification of and resolution of problems. For example, I am currently developing a new process for Held of Sale Assets.
- I undertook a compliance review of FIU Fees & Charges as per the Tasmanian Auditor General Report No. 98 for 2018, tabled in parliament. The review encompassed identifying through communication and research the current fee structure, undertaking an analysis of legislative requirements and identifying management needs and expectations. After evaluating information, I was able to submit a comprehensive report outlining a full QPS fee overview, compliance issues and providing possible cost-effective recommendations. In addition, I used the information to successfully update and revise the existing procedures manual.
- At a strategic level, I have provided advice to the Finance Director, outlining strategic direction of the unit, including analysis of and reporting on issues relating to resourcing and staff within the unit. This analysis and advice has ensured the effective use of resources within the unit.

Context, content relevant to the job and accomplishments

The STAR and CAR methodology was developed to ensure that candidates focussed on putting their experience into context, that they highlighted tasks that were of interest to the selection panel and that achievements and benefits were successfully highlighted (namely the R = Results of the STAR or CAR).

If you end up writing an application, in which you successfully put your experience into **context, demonstrated tasks that are of interest to the prospective employer and have focussed on how the employer will benefit from hiring you**, then even though you have not used the CAR or STAR in the strict sense, you will still have written an effective application.

SO, use the checklist below and make sure you have incorporated the following:

- ~ You have put your experience into context for selection panel members? (Size, budget, challenges)
- ~ You have talked about your experiences and tasks that are relevant to the position / employer? (Examples that most closely align with the job requirements)
- ~ You have talked about your achievements (how the employer will benefit from hiring you).

See the examples below:

CONTEXT

In my position as **Assistant Director**, Australian Tax Office (ATO), I provided high level input in regard to the development and delivery of a governance proficiency model, to strengthen organisational capability.

OUTCOME / RESULT

In this complex strategic role, I contributed directly to the **strategic direction of the whole of ATO** and injected a strategic perspective in the areas of learning & development and governance processes, which are clearly linked to significant changes taking place within the agency.

TASKS/EXPERIENCES

Core to this position, was identifying and understanding the current key issues and trends, the development of a working model, evaluating the extent to which potential outputs would satisfy ATO requirements and the incorporation of planning and direction, which was clearly linked to business and ATO outcomes, including vision, goals and objectives.

In this response, you can see how, even though a traditional STAR or CAR is utilised, the response still clearly outlines the context, actions and results. I have just included the headings context outcome/results and tasks/experiences for your benefit.

CONTEXT and OUTCOME/RESULT

On secondment in the position of **Interviewing and Analyst Officer**, I easily exceeded performance, by achieving 149% in the number of applications processed. Quickly adapting to the new environment, I took full accountability for a number of investigations/interviews.

TASKS/EXPERIENCES

This included determining the process before proceeding, tracking process, through to ensuring full compliance with relevant legislative, policy and regulatory framework. I also took full responsibility for my own learning to achieve results, such as sitting on interviews in order to obtain a high level of technical knowledge and expertise in the area.

Again, you can see that although the traditional STAR or CAR is not utilised, the response still clearly puts the experience into context, talks about actions and results. I often put the results/achievements first, as this is a really great way to get a reader's attention straight away.

PLEASE NOTE: Only use these advanced methods if you are a highly competent writer and the agency/department does not require you to use a STAR or CAR to address the application.

These advanced methods are particularly useful, if you need to submit a statement of claim, EOI or a cover letter.

Step Four – Incorporate your understanding of the position and agency in the selection criteria

Write to the level required

Of the thousands of applications, I have reviewed over the years, one of the **biggest mistake’s candidates make, is the failure to write to the level required.**

It is crucial if you are applying for a promotion or a position at a higher classification to write to an appropriate level that reflects the responsibilities of the position.

While providing an example of how you resolved a minor office dispute, might be acceptable at entry level, responses based on relatively minor matters simply will not suffice at higher-level classifications.

Remember, the higher the classification level, the more complex, challenging and demanding the role will be, and the greater the focus should be on the bigger picture, rather than small issues and examples within your selection criteria.

The Before and After examples below, highlight how you can ensure that you are pitching to the right level in order to meet the demands of the role in question. They relate to a senior administration position with a budget accountability of \$8 million associated with the management of a large-scale project.

Before:

SC 1

Relevant demonstrable experience in the management of administration and office or project coordination

My **project coordination** skills can be demonstrated by the following example.

Whilst I was employed at Deloitte Australia, the company decided to join their international offices in donating their staff’s time for one day to charity. I volunteered to lead this event for Queensland. There was a lot of coordination involved in bringing together 50 staff to work for the community for one day. This involved:

- ~ contacting organisations to establish what we could do for them on the dedicated day
- ~ working out which options were feasible
- ~ organising the external resources that we wanted there on the day
- ~ planning the logistics for day with regard to teams, travel, and equipment
- ~ setting up and coordinating the day

On the day, twenty-five staff planted 500 trees at wetlands. Another twenty-went to the children's hospital where they:

- ~ painted the inside of 4 family accommodation units
- ~ loaded software on PC's for the children's learning centre
- ~ packed showbags for "bluey day"
- ~ read to the children in the wards
- ~ put on a barbecue for staff and patients
- ~ We hired clowns, a face painter, and even the fire brigade with Blazer Bear turned up.

The day was a very rewarding, team building, morale boosting exercise for staff, and a benefit to the community.

This is an example taken from an application the client had written for the role, before seeking professional assistance. While the client had provided a couple of STAR examples, the evidence provided related to a junior role with micro details that did nothing to address the key requirements relating to a senior administration role for a large and complex project.

After:

SC 1

Relevant demonstrable experience in the management of administration and office or project coordination

Throughout my career, I have gained extensive experience in the successful management of complex administrative and project processes.

In my current position as **Program Administrator**, I provide support to the IM coordinator at the council. Within this role, I deliver key support in the coordination of a multimillion-dollar IM Program Project, including the preparation of reports, the development of processes, the management of project registrars, tracking resources and scheduling. This has included management of a **\$6M budget**, including project authorisations and complex cost estimations, utilisation of Project Management software, working directly with vendors, contractors and consultants and developing from inception project management processes, including scheduling reporting through to presentations.

To date, I have successfully developed record management systems, provided templates and detailed procedural notes, as well as carefully managed the budget, in line with a demonstrated need and cost benefit analysis. This has resulted in the successful streamlining of a highly complex project.

The after example has incorporated an example relevant to the advertised position. It has also provided evidence of the client's ability to administer large budgets. Both the language and evidence provided were pitched at a higher level in line with the relevant classification and responsibilities of the position.

Interpret the fit between the role and the selection criteria

This advice sounds obvious, but candidates continually fail to interpret the fit between the role and the selection criteria. When addressing the selection criteria, it is **VITAL to provide tangible proof and evidence that meets the requirements of the position.**

When you address the selection criteria, ensure you marry the duties and responsibilities with the selection criteria and if you don't have direct relevant experience in the position, then utilise transferable skills that will meet the requirements of the agency.

For example, if the selection criteria require you to demonstrate superior communication skills for a position in front line customer service, then the examples you would need to provide would be in relation to a customer service environment, or transferable skills that can be adapted to a customer service environment.

Communication Skills in a Customer Service Environment:

- ~ Resolving conflicts at the front counter
- ~ Negotiating outcomes with customers
- ~ Providing advice on products and services
- ~ Distinguishing the communication style needed for a diverse range of stakeholders
- ~ Attentive listening skills

Similarly, if you need to address selection criteria relating to communication skills and the role is for an executive appointment, then you need to frame your examples within the context of the leadership capability framework.

Communication Skills for an Executive:

- ~ Report writing
- ~ Ministerial briefs
- ~ Actively listening to stakeholders
- ~ Distinguishing the communication style needed for a diverse range of stakeholders
- ~ Establishing formal and informal communication channels
- ~ Keeping people up to date
- ~ Clear verbal, written and electronic communication
- ~ Contributing effectively at leadership/management forums, including ability to debate
- ~ Negotiation skills
- ~ Ability to influence opinions and actions

Pair up hard skills with selection criteria relating to soft skills

A surprising number of selection criteria relate to soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, analytical skills, problem solving, and interpersonal skills. The most effective way to address these criteria is not to provide isolated examples of these soft skills, rather pair these skills up with evidence that relates to your hard skills relevant to the position.

For example:

Role: Senior Project Manager

Integrated Leadership System - Selection Criteria Five Communicates with influence

- ~ Listens, understand and adapts to audience
- ~ Communicates clearly, respectfully and appropriately
- ~ Engages in constructive, persuasive discussion and debate

Example provided:

- ~ Hard skill related to the project management of large-scale whole-of-government project, involving:
 - o Management of human resources within the functional area
 - o Management of procurement of hardware / software
 - o Utilisation of project planning

Soft skills relating to communications, which enabled the effective management of the whole-of-government project:

- ~ Negotiation for resources
- ~ Actively listening to staff members, while delegating activities
- ~ Providing advice to senior management on budget issues
- ~ Communicating information relevant to the stakeholders in a timely manner
- ~ Report writing
- ~ Active involvement in senior management meetings, including influencing decisions
- ~ Consultation with internal and external stakeholders

Try to keep the examples current

Try to keep all your examples current, as most panel members and agencies are more interested in your recent rather than old experience. That is not to say that your earlier work history carries no weight, it is simply that anything that happened further back than seven to ten years ago, can be viewed as less relevant than recent experience.

Incorporate policy

For more senior or professional level roles, you can strategically incorporate relevant policy relating to the agency, which provides evidence of your understanding of how the policy relates to the role and selection criteria.

Example one:

To demonstrate that the candidate was aware of relevant policy issues in public administration, I incorporated a very brief outline of the strategic plan, relating to public administration.

SC 1

Thorough knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues relating to public administration and legislative frameworks, including the ability to provide high level strategic advice on a range of issues

I have extensive knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues relating to public administration and have provided strategic high-level advice on improving government service delivery.

In brief, key contemporary issues relating to public administration are as follows:

Provided an outline of contemporary issues for panel members, combined with examples of where these were applied by the client:

These key contemporary issues relating to public administration are addressed in the ***Service Delivery and Performance Commission Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020***. They include the vision to deliver services effectively and efficiently through demonstrating best practices, and the Commission's mission to improve the delivery of government services by enhancing performance management frameworks in partnership with Government agencies.

Example two:

In this example, I briefly outlined the candidates understanding of Education Queensland's Strategic Plan, followed by policy relating to literacy, as the roles central purpose related to the implementation of the literacy framework.

SC 1

Capacity to provide leadership in education within the context of Education Queensland's Strategic Plan

In order to meet key challenges outlined in **Every student succeeding – State Schools Strategy 2018 - 2022**, it is imperative to take the lead and personally contribute to and champion Education Queensland vision and goals, as well as translate broad strategies into practice.

As Program Manager, Special Needs, I took a collaborative leading role in facilitating and developing plans and strategies to meet the educational needs of a diverse range of students. This involved providing supportive programs in line with the New Basics, Literacy – the Key to learning Framework for Action, and S-13 Educational Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and Learning Disabilities.

Provided outline of actions and results in the role of Program Manager which married up perfectly with the Literacy Framework

Step Five – Use selection criteria speak

I describe selection criteria speak as a way of writing a compelling case for selection panel members. In many ways it is simply a way of presenting your case in the same way that a business writes compelling copy about its products and services (advertising copy), which addresses the needs of the audience (in this case your audience is the selection panel members).

But selection criteria speak goes further. It not only maximises your presentation, but also ensures that you take ownership of the various examples you provide and in a language that meets the needs of the agency.

The key elements to selection criteria speak are the liberal use of key words, action verbs or power words, writing in the first person, taking ownership of activities, and eliminating technical language, acronyms and abbreviations, which selection panel members may not be familiar with.

Make liberal use of key words

Keywords are those that signal to the panel members that you have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to match the job requirements. By incorporating these, panel members scanning your selection criteria and résumé, can make an appropriate connection between your keywords and requirements of the role, which in turn will identify you as an appropriate candidate.

The most common types of keywords that signal to selection panel members that you have the relevant background are:

- ~ Job titles
- ~ Legislation / policy connected with the role
- ~ Skills related to the role
- ~ Relevant Government “buzz” words e.g., whole-of-government,

For example:

Job Description: Procurement Specialist

This position provides an opportunity to use your extensive procurement experience to assist Ipswich in becoming one of Queensland's most desirable places to live, work and play, with new industries, new jobs and a quality lifestyle.

The Procurement Specialist will assist with the procurement functions across Council including process and system improvements, contract administration, consumption and expenditure analysis and strategic procurement planning.

To be successful in this role you will need tertiary qualifications in Business or a related discipline and relevant experience. Analytical and leadership skills and a commitment to customer service are also essential.

Key words that should be incorporated into the application (selection criteria, resume and cover letter)

- ~ Procurement specialist
- ~ Process and system improvements
- ~ Contract administration
- ~ Consumption and expenditure analysis
- ~ Strategic procurement planning
- ~ Leadership
- ~ Analytical skills
- ~ Customer service

Always write in the first person and claim ownership of activities

By writing in the first person and claiming ownership of activities, you will strengthen the evidence provided.

Please note:

In writing in the first person, it is not necessary to use 'I' at the beginning of each sentence. As a professional, I interchangeably use 'I' with sentences that begin with an action word, such as managed, spearheaded, instrumental, implemented, designed etc. particularly when utilising bullet points to list activities and results.

When writing a resume to accompany your application, also use first person narrative, but in this document, remove the 'I'.

Acronyms / Abbreviations and Jargon

Make sure you avoid jargon, or acronyms that are specific to your current position and are not applicable to the new position you are applying for.

An acronym is a shortened form of a phrase, like an abbreviation, with the distinction that it can be pronounced as a word.

Acronym

TELF = Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Abbreviation

ATO = Australian Tax Office

The public sector, like the private sector is littered with acronyms and abbreviations, but use acronyms and abbreviations sparingly within the application, unless you are confident that panel members are already familiar with the acronym or abbreviation in question.

Basic rules:

- ~ If the acronym or abbreviation is from another agency, insert and use the full phrase throughout your application.
- ~ If the acronym or abbreviation originates from the agency in question, make liberal use of it throughout your application.
- ~ If the acronym or abbreviation is industry standard, - for example LAN = local area network, use it throughout your application.
- ~ If you are uncertain whether the selection panel is familiar with the acronym or abbreviation, use the full phrase throughout the application.

Use action verbs or power words

How you present yourself on paper can really alter the perception of the reader and one vital way to present yourself as a strong candidate is to use action verbs, or power words within your selection criteria.

See the examples that follow:

Before	After
Started a policy to recruit Responsible for negotiating with Grant security access Set up payroll system My responsibility was to run projects Increased profitability by 100 percent	Developed and designed a policy to Spearheaded negotiations with Managed security access Instrumental in implementing a new I successfully managed projects Dramatically increased profitability by

As you can see from above, by using action verbs, you can present yourself in a really strong way. This is not about exaggerating your capabilities and responsibilities - it is simply a way of presenting yourself in a powerful and honest way.

To assist you in this task, I have provided you with a table of action words, which you can utilise in your application and résumé.

Warning: Strategic power words will always ensure that the overall thrust of what you are saying is maximised, but it is important to remain truthful at all times, as you will need to substantiate these claims at interview and have referees that can back you up. So, if you did not dramatically increase profit, replace this with a power phrase that more accurately reflects the truth, such as improved profitability.

Table of Action Words

Accommodated	Developed	Organised
Accomplished	Devised	
Achieved	Diagnosed	Persuaded
Acquired	Directed	Planned
Acted	Disciplined	Predicted
Addressed	Discovered	Presented
Administered		Presided
Advised	Effected	Projected
Advocated	Empathised	
Analysed	Enabled	Rectified
Anticipated	Encouraged	Redesigned
Appointed	Enforced	Reduced
Appraised	Engaged	Refined
Approved	Ensured	Renegotiated
Arbitrated	Exceeded	Reorganised
Assessed	Executed	Repaired
Audited	Explored	Represented
		Researched
Balanced	Facilitated	Reshaped
Bargained	Forecast	Resolved
Brainstormed	Formulated	Restored
Built	Founded	Restructured
Changed	Generated	Saved
Clarified	Guided	Shaped
Classified		Simplified
Coached	Identified	Sold
Collaborated	Implemented	Solved
Collated	Improved	Stimulated
Combined	Improvised	Spearheaded
Communicated	Incorporated	Strengthened
Competed	Increased	Structured
Competed	Influenced	Succeeded
Composed	Initiated	Surpassed
Conceived	Innovated	
Conceptualised	Inspired	
Conducted	Instituted	
Confronted	Integrated	
Constructed	Invented	
Contributed		
Controlled	Led	
Cooperated	Lobbied	
Coordinated		
Corrected	Managed	
Counselled	Marketed	
Created	Mediated	
	Mentored	
Decided	Mobilised	
Delivered	Monitored	
Demonstrated	Motivated	
Designed		
Detected	Negotiated	

Step Six- Make it easy to read with a well laid-out document

Selection panel members need to read dozens, if not hundreds of applications, so it is important to make the document clear, easy to read and visually appealing. It never ceases to amaze me, that candidates will spend hours creating a visually appealing and easy to read résumé, yet will produce a document addressing selection criteria, that is drab, untidy, difficult to read and unprofessional.

Don't use fancy fonts

The plain 'Times New Roman' 'Georgia' 'Veranda' or 'Arial' is perfectly suitable for most headings and text and they also have the advantage of being two fonts frequently used in government circles.

Arial: Example font - (10 point)

Times New Roman: Example font - (12 point)

You should also avoid using more than two fonts, which looks haphazard and unprofessional. Keep in mind a few agencies actually specify a font size and type (e.g., Arial 11), which you will need to adhere to if requested.

Use headings and sub-headings

The use of headings and sub-headings is a great way to highlight key information that you want to convey to the selection panel. Likewise **highlight key words** and phrases with bold type. This one little secret is more powerful than you might realise. You see, when someone is quickly reading your application, their eyes immediately want to scan the content to get a big picture of what's on the page, before slowing down to commit reading your application in depth. By bolding key words, a reader will scan for meaning and will usually slow down and read in detail everything on the page.

Before:

I have relevant experience in workplace training and activities, which will enable me to identify, develop, review, and deliver training activities in order to improve standard operating procedures, as well as provide on the job training. As a Training Officer at HO Proprietary Limited, I gained significant experience in relation to training involving:

- ~ Identification of training needs and requirements – including input into the review of current syllabus topics, to ascertain whether courses included all relevant material required for the delivery of a relevant syllabus for staff.
- ~ Development of enhanced course structures – I provided input into course proposal, including ensuring that workplace training activities were relevant to the role, such as relevant legislation and contemporary practices and procedures.
- ~ Review of delivery of training content –I was involved in the review of delivery of training, to ascertain whether new learning strategies could be incorporated to achieve desired outcomes.
- ~ Delivery of training courses – I delivered a range of training including OH & S, First Aid, Firefighting, Weapons Training, including awareness of issues relating to space utilisation, training schedules, presentation styles, learning strategies, including use of visuals, dynamic communication and monitoring and assessment.

After:

I have relevant experience in workplace training and activities, which will enable me to identify, develop, review, and deliver training activities in order to improve standard operating procedures, as well as provide on the job training. As a **Training Officer** at H Proprietary Limited, I gained significant experience in relation to training involving:

- ~ **Identification of training needs and requirements** – including input into the review of current syllabus topics, to ascertain whether courses included all relevant material required for the delivery of a relevant syllabus for staff.
- ~ **Development of enhanced course structures** – I provided input into course proposal, including ensuring workplace training activities were relevant to the role, such as relevant legislation and contemporary practices and procedures.
- ~ **Review of delivery of training content** – I was involved in the review of delivery of training, to ascertain whether new learning strategies could be incorporated to achieve desired outcomes.
- ~ **Delivery of training courses** – I delivered a range of training, including OH & S, Fire Aid, Firefighting, Weapons Training, including awareness of issues relating to space utilisation, training schedules, presentation styles, learning strategies, including use of visuals, dynamic communication and monitoring and assessment.

Bullet points

Use bullet points, or short paragraphs, when outlining your achievements and actions. The advantage of bullet points is that they **make it easier to read an application and when used strategically, can highlight key skills and achievements.**

I have successfully used bullet points for all classification levels, including very senior applications, where I use them to emphasise accomplishments and achievements.

Before:

As Marketing and Events Manager at Serba Enterprises, I am responsible for aspects of business development and marketing, including business profile creation and management, business relationships and network management, market research and opportunity identification, marketing and promotion activities and service delivery performance management.

In this role, I have successfully developed schemes for marketing training products, including the development of key relationships with training centres. This has involved the development of key marketing tools for training institutions in relation to the collaborative promotion of courses in relation to owner builders, including the *Super Provider Starter Pack*. This has involved ensuring all promotional written material, and handouts are written in a user-friendly way, with unambiguous content and clear simple English. In this role, I have also managed the entire process relating to the production of an industry newsletter, facilitated meetings with Adult Community Training Centres in regards to the promotion and development of training seminars and the formation of alliances, partnerships and joint ventures, persuaded and influenced stakeholders (institutions and presenters) in regards to the huge benefits of running owner building training courses and seminars on sustainable buildings, including obtaining agreement on deliverables and persuading them of the financial benefits of the relationship. Finally, I have successfully developed media networks through proactive relationship building

Within this role, my key successes have included the effective promotion of the delivery of training programs to a diverse range of Adult Community Education Centres and individuals, including via the media, resulting in 51 new alliances, partnerships and joint

ventures. I have also prepared a successful marketing package, which can be understood by a diverse range of individuals and stakeholders.

After:

As Marketing and Events Manager at Serbia Enterprises, I am responsible for aspects of business development and marketing, including business profile creation and management, business relationships and network management, market research and opportunity identification, marketing and promotion activities and service delivery performance management. In this role, I have successfully developed schemes for marketing training products, including the development of key relationships with training centres. This has involved:

- ~ The development of key marketing tools for training institutions in relation to the collaborative promotion of courses in regard to owner builders, including writing and producing the *Super Provider Starter Pack*. This has involved ensuring all promotional written material, and handouts are written in a user-friendly way, with unambiguous content and clear simple English.
- ~ I have managed the entire process relating to the production of an industry newsletter.
- ~ I have facilitated meetings with Adult Community Training Centres in regard to the promotion and development of training seminars and the formation of alliances, partnerships and joint ventures.
- ~ I have developed media networks through proactive relationship building.

Within this role, my key successes have included:

- ~ The effective promotion of the delivery of training programs to a diverse range of Adult Community Education Centres and individuals, including via the media, resulting in 51 new alliances, partnerships and joint ventures
- ~ The preparation of a successful marketing package, which can be understood by a diverse range of individuals and stakeholders.

Step Seven - Proofread your application

Proofreading your application is critical to your success. Your application is a representation of your best work to the selection panel and one of the biggest gripes of panel members are of documents littered with errors

Below are some tips to ensure that your document is error free:

Use Australian English on your computer's spell checker

Using your computer's spell checker and grammar checker is great, but don't rely on them entirely and ensure that you have your spelling check on Australian English, not US English - otherwise your document will be riddled with spelling mistakes, such as color, instead of colour, or organization, instead of organisation.

Take a break

If time allows – **have at least 24 hours away from the document** before proofreading it. Even if you think your application looks great – trust me, if you don't have time away from the document, you will miss glaring mistakes.

If you have at least 24 hours away from the document, I guarantee you will find lots of holes, gross typos, unclear wording, grammatical errors and spelling mistakes.

Read a hard copy

Although printing out your application can be a nuisance, don't be tempted to read it on your computer screen. It is easier to spot mistakes on a piece of paper, than it is on a computer screen.

Get Outside Eyes

An outsider will be able to quickly pick up spelling and grammar mistakes and offer suggestions to enhance the readability of your application, or comment on its content.

However, when you run it past people, get their **Reaction on content, NOT their Opinion.**

Opinion: This application is too long.

Reaction: I got bored halfway through your application.

Opinion: You shouldn't use this kind of type and format.

Reaction: I found the application hard to read.

Opinion: I think you should replace this word with another.

Reaction: I found this word did not make sense.

By focusing on people's reactions, rather than opinions, than you will be able to focus on legitimate feedback, not someone's subjective opinion, which won't necessarily enhance your current application.

Read your application backwards

I know this tip might sound bizarre, but it really works! By reading your application backwards one word at a time, it forces you to look at each word, rather than each sentence. As your brain can't fill in information, you end up reading what is actually written on the page, rather than the brain filling in what you think ought to be written on the page.

Chapter 12

Avoiding the common pitfalls

In this chapter, I cover the major errors contained in thousands of client applications I have reviewed since 2003, including clients already within the public service sector.

By avoiding these common pitfalls, you will significantly improve upon the quality of your application.

Not providing a solid overview of your experience throughout the application

A common failing is not providing a compelling case with all your relevant experience, throughout your application. To avoid this:

- ~ When using the STAR or CAR model, it is often necessary to provide more than one example per criterion, (depending on the word limit, or classification level).
- ~ Don't make the **STAR or CAR too narrow in focus** i.e., don't use small micro examples that don't provide the reader with a real focus on what your overall responsibilities and **achievements** were.
- ~ Utilise relevant experience throughout your application. For example, scatter your experience throughout your application, so it covers all your relevant work history relating to the position in question. (Please refer to Chapter 13, on Developing a Framework, which provides an example of how you can utilise various working examples throughout an application)

Not putting your experience into context for panel members

One key mistake candidate make is failing to put their experience into context.

Take for example this answer to selection criteria relating to supervising and developing staff.

SC The ability to supervise and develop staff

I am skilled and experienced in achieving organisation and operational objectives through leading and developing individuals and teams. In my role as a manager and leader of people, team objectives are participatively established, and team members are regularly briefed on work goals, plans and operational issues. Team members' personal development requirements are assessed in accordance with the corporate human resource strategy and include development plans for each individual with relevant development activities clearly identified and agreed.

As a manager I seek to provide opportunities for staff involvement in decision making and problem solving. In motivating staff, I have recognised staff members' needs and wants, and where possible, incorporate these into their work assignments. I also seek to recognise, promote and reward work group achievements, and to acknowledge the importance of individual staff contributions. In maintaining and developing team harmony I facilitate and encourage cooperation in the workplace, through work allocation and the creation of small teams for specific projects.

I seek to develop a work environment where people pull together and value collaboration and teamwork. I create a sense of 'interconnectedness' internally and with other organisations, ensuring opportunities to share views and ideas. I role-model 'team-player' behaviour, including a willingness to consult and listen.

I value individual differences and diversity, through supporting and respecting the individuality of others and recognising the benefits of diversity of ideas and approaches. I acknowledge different skill areas and levels of expertise. I understand others and respond to them in an appropriate way.

As a leader I guide, mentor and develop staff, and encourage ongoing learning in others. I provide timely recognition for good performance, and motivate others by setting challenging goals, as well as supporting and encouraging them when they need assistance to overcome problems. I address areas of weakness by encouraging staff to take an active role in their own development, and I create a climate with opportunities to do so. I have taken action to deal with difficult performance situations.

While on the surface this answer sounds fine and it covers all the requirements relating to supervising and developing staff, **it fails dismally on several fronts:**

- ~ It does not tell the selection panel members where the candidate gained this experience in supervising and developing staff or rather it does put the candidate's experience into context. That is, selection panel members are totally in the dark in regard to the scope of her supervisory role, type of organisation, number of staff, sector and industry.
- ~ It fails to talk about how her supervisory and development skills resulted in benefits to the organisation. (Yes – I'm back to the achievements mantra)! For example, did her supervisory and development skills result in high retention rates among staff members, staff being trained successfully into higher positions, improvements in Key Performance Indicators by all staff members, or an improvement in productivity by staff members?

The easiest way to avoid this common trap is to use some sort of selection criteria methodology, CAR or STAR that I outlined in the previous chapter.

Excessive use of soft skills without evidence

Another key mistake candidates make with selection criteria that relate to soft skills and personality attributes (e.g. communication skills, integrity, honesty, professionalism), is to simply state they have these skills, without providing any tangible evidence.

Again, the easiest way to avoid this pitfall is to simply use a STAR, or CAR methodology, and pair soft skills up with evidence relating to hard skills.

Not keeping each selection criteria response to a consistent length

If a weighting is not provided, then you need to assume that each selection criteria has equal weighting. This means you will need to ensure that the length of your response to each selection criteria is about the same, so there is a perception of strength for each and every selection criterion. That is, don't write one page on the first and second criteria and then only a paragraph, for the remaining ones, as this could weaken your overall application. Remember, each criterion will be scored and marked, and the total added up, for the final result.

Don't offer an opinion

Another failing of candidates, in particular at the senior level, is to provide an opinion on a subject matter, be it why a particular work area is not functioning effectively, through to offering a personal opinion on a particular policy, methodology, or activity.

Avoid offering an opinion, as it takes you to the deep and murky waters of 'subjectivity'. That is opinions, are not facts and a personal perspective might harm, rather than enhance your application, in particular if a panel member happens to disagree with your point of view.

Other Common Failings

I have already covered these common failings, but to reiterate and highlight how important it is NOT to fall into these traps, I have provided a checklist below for you to work through:

- ☐ Have you addressed all parts of all the selection criteria?
- ☐ Have you addressed ALL the selection criteria, including desirables?
- ☐ Have you ensured your application is sufficiently results-oriented, and highlights your achievements and contributions?
- ☐ Have you met ALL the department's requirements relating to length and formatting?
- ☐ Have you addressed the selection criteria in a way that mirrors the requirements of the position?
- ☐ Is the response relevant to the selection criteria and clear to the reader (not unnecessarily long, unstructured, or unclear)?
- ☐ Have you pitched the application at the right level and provided appropriate examples (evidence)?

PART SIX

OTHER TYPES OF GOVERNMENT APPLICATIONS

Chapter 13 Behavioural Questions

You will often come across applications that don't require you to directly address the selection criteria, but rather involves addressing a behavioural question.

Most agency's/departments won't refer to them as behavioural questions, but this is exactly what they are, namely a question that elicits a response that reflects and predicts how you will behave in the future (and for the specific role).

For example:

- a. *Describe a situation where you were required to make a complex or difficult decision which impacted on service delivery or affected a staff member/colleague. What processes did you use? How did you deliver the message?*
- b. *Give an example where you planned an operational event, conference or other complex activity.*

Related Selection Criteria

- ~ *Managerial and Planning*
- ~ *Communication and Client Focus*

When addressing these behavioural questions, keep in mind that they will be assessed against the agency's selection or assessment criteria and **will need to be answered within the context of the role in question.**

Write to the level required

Ensure that the examples you provide are relevant to the classification level. The higher the level, the greater the focus should be on providing examples relevant to a senior role.

Achievements

While the behavioural question might not necessarily provide scope in regard to incorporating achievements, make sure you don't leave out your achievements. I know this achievements mantra is starting to sound boring, but remember, it is the difference between an OK application and application that immediately attracts the attention of panel members.

Understand the agency's requirements

When addressing behavioural questions, it is vital to understand what the agency's requirements are. If they require a candidate with supervisory capabilities, then addressing the behavioural criteria with an example that does not provide evidence of supervising staff, will significantly weaken your application.

Use a CAR or STAR

Behavioural questions are a perfect example of how you can use a CAR or STAR to provide an appropriate response.

Example:

When describing excellent customer service, I framed this to match the specific job requirements.

When providing a specific example, I utilised a CAR.

There was a word limit of 300.

Describe what you consider excellent customer service is? Provide a specific example of a time when you provided excellent customer service when delivering a project or assistance to a client.

Within the Project Group, I understand that that I will be the face of the Division and this is a customer-intensive business function. What I consider excellent customer service in this sphere?

The ability to understand customer needs, including the ability to work closely with customers to determine the problem such as actively listening and gaining confirmation of understanding.

To set standards and measure performance and making sure appropriate service levels and performance indicators are maintained. This includes meeting any deadlines and ensuring rapid service turnaround, such as handling any issues promptly and being highly organised.

Using clear and concise verbal and written communication, including ensuring a customer is kept up-to-date and fully informed, in particular if there are any changes to the original communication.

A specific example of my ability to provide excellent customer service to a client:

At Queensland Shared Services, a Manager raised an issue where staff members were being underpaid in the Group allowance, due to specific contract arrangements at the School. To resolve this, I needed to come up with a way that would allow this to be paid via a new payroll system. To resolve this:

I quickly identified the key issues from the Manager including liaison with SME's and referring to the staff handbooks and other legislation to ensure that this was within the Departmental guidelines.

I worked hard to resolve the problem including taking personal responsibility to make sure the problem was resolved.

Throughout the process, I successfully kept the Manager informed at all the stages, including explaining the specific challenges and timelines.

As a result of my commitment to customer service, I was able to quickly identify a way to pay the allowance in the new system, with all staff members successfully back paid.

Chapter 14

Cover letters

For the majority of applications, there is a trend away from long and complex applications that require a candidate to address selection criteria. Instead, a candidate simply needs to submit a 1 or 2-page cover.

The biggest mistake job candidates make is to assume that a cover letter is a standard type of cover letter that you would use for the private sector.

Cover letters in government are comprehensive and detailed.

Now the key to writing an effective cover letter is to ensure that you provide ample evidence as to **how you meet the work-related requirements, assessment criteria or selection criteria** and corroboration provided relates to the duties of the role.

Steps to create an effective cover letter

It is not always necessary to directly respond to each and every criterion within the cover letter, but you do need to make sure you provide sufficient evidence of the skills, experience and knowledge you bring to the role.

If you are asked to submit either a 1- or 2-page cover letter, use the full 2 pages, so you can give panel members a detailed understanding of the VALUE that you offer.

If you are limited to just 1-page, keep the cover letter opening and closing short and focus on corroboration. (Refer to Chapter 18 on working with tight word or character counts).

As with addressing traditional selection criteria, avoid:

- A cover letter that fails to talk about your achievements (tangible outcomes) or fails to put your experience into context for readers (size, scope and challenges that you encountered).
- Belief statements without evidence. (A belief statement: *Strong leadership requires honesty and integrity, the ability to inspire others, passion, accountability, creativity and innovation and excellent communication skills*).
- The inclusion of information that is irrelevant to the position requirements.
- A cover letter that fails to directly, or indirectly meet all the position requirements.
- A cover letter that fails to provide evidence (examples) that pertain to the job description.

Step One: Preparation

As with addressing traditional selection criteria you need to do the background work, before commencing a draft.

~ **Compile a Career Portfolio** (Refer to chapter 8)

~ **Research the Department/Agency requirements** (Refer to chapter 6)

The most important task is to prepare a list of CARs for each and every relevant position. (Refer to chapter 8, if you don't have a list of CARs (achievements) as this is VITAL).

Step Two: Cover Letter Opening

It is important that your opening grabs immediate reader attention. For example:

It appears that my background may be the perfect fit for your new opening. I'm also very excited about making a contribution to your organisation, as your department is conducting breakthrough policy in an area that I have specialised in'. (Conveying passion

and enthusiasm and linking up the company requirements with what the job candidate can offer them)

'Since I can remember I wanted to make a difference to children's lives. A recent graduate from the University of Queensland, I'm excited about your entry-level openings at the Department of Attorney-General' (Passion and enthusiasm about the opportunity)

'As a marketing professional with over 10 years' experience in your sector, an extensive network of contacts and a degree in marketing, I'm confident that my credentials meets your exact requirements.' (Becoming the solution as a result of the job candidates experience in the sector and extensive network of contacts)

Compare these openers with what the bulk of job applicants' use:

In response to your recent job posting for a registered nurse, advertised in SEEK, please find enclosed a copy of my resume. (Yawn)

Please accept this letter and resume for marketing manager position as referenced in the Gazette. (Dull and boring)

In your opening, make sure one or more of the special ingredients are incorporated, namely:

- ✓ An understanding of the department/agency and role
- ✓ Your enthusiasm for the job
- ✓ How you can help solve their problems, e.g., manage complex projects; streamline administration; save the government money.

The bulk of job applicants don't incorporate one or more of these ingredients in their cover letter openings, which is why they don't immediately capture interest.

Step Three: Corroboration

Once you understand their specific requirements, you need to provide examples that meet their specific requirements, including selection criteria, or assessment criteria.

I shared this exercise in Chapter 8, but I will reiterate this exercise, as it is invaluable.

Draw a line down the middle of the page and on one side, list the job needs and selection criteria or assessment criteria that are highlighted in the application pack and on the other line, list all your jobs and achievements that prove you meet the skills, knowledge and experience required. This exercise will help you to pinpoint your assets that the job requires and will help shape your cover letter.

The department/job requirements:	The experience and achievements that prove that I meet these needs:

Once you have a framework in place, when you draft the cover letter, provide an overview of what you offer and include specific examples.

Key strategies to ensure that you meet the exact needs of department/agency:

- ✓ Utilise and mirror the language used in the job application pack. If they require someone that is energetic, use the word energetic or a similar word to describe your soft skills.
- ✓ Outline your work history that is relevant to the position.
- ✓ Talk about your achievements and quantifiable successes and use the STAR or CAR methodology, so you focus on putting your experience into context and talk about your achievements.
- ✓ Use a checklist to ensure that you have addressed the bulk of the requirements listed in the job advertisement.

Step Four: Cover Letter closing

Close with a confident finish that invites the reader to take further action (namely invite you to a panel interview).

I look forward to hearing from you where I can share in more detail what I offer.

Thank you for taking the time to review my application and I look forward to the opportunity to meeting with the selection panel.

I'm excited about this opportunity and I look forward to talking about his opportunity further.

Compare these closers with what the bulk of job applicants' use:

Thank you for your consideration of my application.

You will find my resume attached and thank you for your time.

Example time

Now, that I've provided the specific steps, I'm now going to provide a specific example of a 2-page cover letter, so you can get a better understanding of how to write an effective cover letter for government.

An example:

This specific position was for a mid-level graphic design artist and the relevant assessment criteria for this position was as follows:

Relevant Qualifications

Demonstrated ability to act proactively and work without supervision

Proven ability to work with both internal and external stakeholders

Proven ability to meet strict deadlines and focus on performance

Excellent research and analytical skills

Specialist skills and knowledge in graphic design

Using the T-Account:

Relevant Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Design – Visual Communications - Queensland University and Colorado College of Art and Design University • Diploma of Graphic Design – Bremer Institute of TAFE • Certificate III in Arts and Contemporary Craft, Southbank Institute of Technology
Ability to act proactively and work without supervision	<p>As the sole Graphic Designer, CentreforceIT Pty Ltd worked independently and used initiative to meet new branding requirements. Results, met all responsibilities of the role and successful templates developed to date include advertising guidelines, forms and regular publications that staff members use on an almost daily basis.</p> <p>As a Graphic Design for MediaShark, worked independently on major projects. This included the roll out of the Samsung Galaxy for Optus. (Over 56 design collateral). Was able to adhere to multiple requirements across a portfolio of clients, including: Siteground, HK Certifiers, The Scuba Coach, Telstra, Print Image Signs and AMP.</p>
Ability to work with both internal and external stakeholders	<p>Graphic Designer, CentreforceIT Pty Ltd, worked with internal customers and external contractors, including suppliers, staff members, printers, contractors and photographers. Examples:</p> <p>Secured significant savings, e.g. with printing services, saving in excess of 25% on costs.</p> <p>Worked with staff on joint publications, meeting a really tight deadline.</p>
Ability meet strict deadlines and focus on performance	<p>Graphic Design (Freelance) for MediaShark, worked on large projects for major organisations. For example, worked on the design launch collateral for the National Broadband Network, meeting strict deadlines on multiple design requirements.</p> <p>As Graphic Designer, CentreforceIT Pty Ltd developed a planning framework so all projects can be successfully planned in advance.</p>
Excellent research and analytical skills	<p>Graphic Designer for Brown Architects, worked on major tender submissions and EOI's for this prominent This required research and</p>

	<p>planning to ensure adherence to graphic design requirements and to create an integrated package for multi-million dollar submissions, such as the Commonwealth Games velodrome project and Townsville SECC. Submission. Townsville submission was successful and my contribution included graphically designing the 2D rendering and operational communicative diagrams.</p>
Specialist skills and knowledge in graphic design	<p>Over 6 years experience. Examples:</p> <p>Graphic Designer for a leading and the well renowned architects, Brown Architects</p> <p>Working for blue-chip companies, as a Freelancer at MediaShark. Graphic design for major companies, e.g. graphic design for the roll out of the National Broadband Network.</p> <p>Worked as a Graphic Designer for CentreforceIT Pty Ltd, reducing the costs associated with marketing and print production and ensuring that every project deadline on the schedule was met.</p>

You will see with the example below that within the cover letter, all the specific requirements of the job were addressed.

You will also note that they are NOTHING like a cover letter that you would draft for the private sector!

DAVID COLLINS

M: 0448 672 563 • david.collinsdesign@gmail.com

1st December 2019

Department of Premier and Cabinet
Online Application

Re: Assistant Advisor (Graphic Design) – QLD/87563/19

My background should be the perfect fit for your new opening, with significant experience in delivering effective design services and solutions, across multiple digital and graphic design platforms. I offer the following qualifications, skills and experience:

Qualifications

- **Bachelor of Design** – Visual Communications - Queensland University and Colorado College of Art and Design University (I note that I secured a Scholarship to Colorado, due to exceptional performance)
- **Diploma of Graphic Design** – Bremer Institute of TAFE
- **Certificate III in Arts and Contemporary Craft**, Southbank Institute of Technology

I have the capacity to be self-directed and work without supervision.

As the sole **Graphic Designer, CentreforceIT Pty Ltd**, I work independently to ensure the provision of high quality, reliable and cost-effective graphic design services for all publications. The firm had launched a *rebrand in 2018* and with staff not adhering to branding guidelines across a range of material; I took the initiative to develop new templates. These templates are ensuring that staff are successfully meeting the new branding guidelines and are reinforcing branding requirements. Templates developed to date include advertising guidelines, forms and regular publications that staff members use on an almost daily basis.

As a **Graphic Design (Freelance) for MediaShark**, I also worked independently and in a self-directed manner on major projects. For example: I managed the graphic design for the roll out of the Samsung Galaxy for Optus. This involved understanding and adhering to strict and complex branding guidelines and hitting the ground running on multiple tasks and designs across diverse mediums, from banners, billboards, website, vehicle wraps, through to point-of-sale documentation (over 56 design collateral). As a result of my independent and careful work, I was able to adhere to multiple requirements across a portfolio of clients, including: Siteground, HK Certifiers, The Scuba Coach, Telstra, Print Image Signs and AMP.

I bring to this position, extensive experience in working with internal customers and external contractors, including staff, printers, designers, illustrators and distributors. Specific example:

As the **Graphic Designer, CentreforceIT Pty Ltd**, I design and produce all print and web marketing materials (publications, newsletters, invitation, programs, flyers, posters, eDMs). This involves extensive collaboration with internal customers and external contractors, including suppliers, staff members, printers, contractors and photographers. In this position:

- I have secured **significant savings (running into the thousands of dollars)**, through the effective establishment and negotiation of terms for services provide. For example, reducing printing on the 2017 Calendar from \$16,317.30 to \$3,790.70. I note that due to my capacity to work successfully with service providers, I have managed to run under the prior allocated budget and save in excess of **35%**.
- I have worked with different parties to collate joint publications, including for example, a biannual publication, *ICT Navigator*. This involved obtaining feedback, articles and then compiling and designing the publication (typography, page layout, colours, photography etc.). By working successfully with others, including working with both contributors, commercial service providers and the communication consultant, I have ensured the effective delivery of a publication and the seamless flow of article information, imagery and design, in spite of problems relating to the delay in receiving submissions from staff and needing to meet the almost impossible project deadline.

I have the capacity to meet strict deadlines and meet major challenges.

As a **Graphic Design (Freelance) for MediaShark**, I worked on large projects for major organisations. For example, I worked on the design launch collateral for the National Broadband Network. Meeting strict deadlines, I successfully met multiple design requirements with highly complex requirements for both press and print collateral.

As the **Graphic Designer, CentreforceIT Pty Ltd** I have used my organisational skills to make key suggestions in terms of managing diverse projects. Upon my arrival it became evident that there was a problem with some schedules, so I have developed myself a planning framework, so all projects can be successfully planned in advance. This has included for example, developing a specific timetable to manage the *Foundation Annual Report* for the organisation, including coordinating all stakeholders.

As a result of this input and my organisational skills, I have not only able to meet my specific tasks, but I have helped the whole administration team by ensuring the organisation moved from an ad-hoc approach, to a careful planning framework for all scheduled projects resulting in on-time delivery of all projects.

I have the capacity to rigorously research and analyse information and show judgement and common sense.

As a **Graphic Designer for Brown Architects**, I successfully worked on major tender submissions and EOI's for this prominent Architecture practice. Brown Architects works on major projects which has included the redevelopment of the Powerhouse, Sydney Olympic Park Aquatic Centre, through to the National Maritime Museum of China. I personally worked on major submissions that required detailed research and planning to ensure adherence to graphic design requirements and to create an integrated package for multi-million-dollar submissions, such as the Commonwealth Games velodrome project and Townsville SECC Submission. I note that the Townsville submission was successful, and my contribution included graphically designing the 2D rendering and operational communicative diagrams.

I bring to this position over 6 years' experience in graphic design and possess all the technical skills and knowledge required for this position. This includes knowledge and or experience across print and electronic design, photography, video-animation services, illustrations, interface designs, corporate communication services, audio-visual, events and display materials and strict adherence to branding guidelines. Career highlights include:

Appointment as a **Graphic Designer** for a leading and the well renowned architects, **Brown Architects**, where I successfully managed graphic services, from creating 2D architectural plan renderings, communication diagrams, coordinating marketing materials, updating the website, and branding and formatting office collateral.

Working for blue-chip companies, as a **Freelancer at MediaShark**. With only top graphic designers with exceptionally high standards of practice in graphic design invited to work for MediaShark, I was privileged to gain immense experience and work on some of the top projects within the company. This included graphic design on the launch of major phones within Telstra, including the iPhone and the Samsung Galaxy, along with the design collateral for the roll out of the National Broadband Network.

Finally, I have successfully worked as a **Graphic Designer for CentreforceIT Pty Ltd**, including successfully reducing the costs associated with marketing and print production and ensuring that every project deadline on the schedule was successfully.

Because 'proven skills' and 'personal attributes' are best presented at interview, I hope I get the opportunity to demonstrate how my qualifications and experience can ensure effective design solutions for the Department.

Sincerely

David Collins

Chapter 15

Expressions of Interest and Statements of Claim

Expressions of Interest

Expressions of interest (EOI) come in multiple formats, but in my experience, they generally require:

- A 1 to 2-page cover letter (refer to chapter 14).
- Statement of claim (refer to the content below).

Statement of Claim

Like a 1- or 2-page cover letter, a statement of claim is part of a big trend away from long and complex applications that require a candidate to address a long list of selection criteria.

Ironically, they are very demanding to write, because of the page and word limits and in many respects harder than addressing traditional selection criteria.

An example of a statement of claim:

- In a statement of claim (maximum of 2-pages) describe how your skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications make you suitable for the role.
- In a statement of 1,000 words, what skills, experience and knowledge will you bring to the position?
- Prepare a one-page statement in relation to the advertised role, outlining how your skills, knowledge and experience will be relevant to the role and any specific examples or achievements that demonstrate your ability to perform in the role.

As with addressing traditional selection criteria, avoid:

- A statement that fails to talk about your achievements (tangible outcomes) or fails to put your experience into context for readers (size, scope and challenges that you encountered).
- Belief statements without evidence. (A belief statement: *Strong leadership requires honesty and integrity, the ability to inspire others, passion, accountability, creativity and innovation and excellent communication skills*).
- The inclusion of information that is irrelevant to the position requirements.
- A statement that fails to directly, or indirectly meet all the position requirements.
- A statement that fails to provide evidence (examples) that pertain to the job description.

Step One: Preparation

As with addressing traditional selection criteria and a 2-page cover letter, you need to do the background research work, before commencing a draft.

~ **Compile a Career Portfolio** (Refer to chapter 8)

~ **Research the Department/Agency requirements** (Refer to chapter 6)

The most important task is to prepare a list of CARs for each and every relevant position. (Refer to chapter 8, if you don't have a list of CARs (achievements) as this is VITAL).

Step Two: Corroboration

You need to understand their specific requirements and analyse all the material about the role: duties, essential requirements, capabilities, selection criteria and if applicable work level standards.

Once you understand their specific requirements, you need to provide examples that meet their specific requirements, including the job description (duties and responsibilities) selection criteria, or assessment criteria.

I shared this exercise in Chapter 8 and Chapter 14, but I will reiterate this exercise, as it is invaluable.

Draw a line down the middle of the page and on one side, list the job needs (duties and responsibilities) and selection criteria or assessment criteria that are highlighted in the application pack and on the other line, list all your jobs and achievements (CAR's) that prove you meet the skills, knowledge and experience required. This exercise will help you to pinpoint your assets that the job requires and will help shape your statement of claim.

The department/job requirements:	The experience and achievements that prove that I meet these needs:

Step Three: Writing Framework

When I craft a statement of claim, I use the following framework:

- An opening sentence, providing a very brief summary of the RELEVANT skills, knowledge and experience the client brings to the role.
- Several powerful examples that provide evidence that the client possesses the relevant skills, knowledge and experience required (selection criteria and assessment criteria). I use some sort of evidence-based methodology when writing these examples such as CAR or STAR and I endeavour to use the strongest examples possible.
- A quick summary (I will always preference another example over a summary if the word limit is very tight).

See an example below, where a statement of claim provided evidence of the ability to meet the very specialist requirements of the role. These included:

- Experience in statistics
- Quality assurance and improvement processes
- Time management
- Qualifications in statistics or maths
- Front-line customer service
- Experience in interpreting policy or legislation
- Communication skills and working with diverse stakeholders

A quick summary was not included due to the word limit and was instead replaced by a summary of relevant qualifications.

I bring to this position 5 years' experience from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), including working with customers and building organisational capability in the area of population statistics and health and disability statistics. I offer the following:

I have the capacity to juggle competing priorities and improve quality outcomes. As Analyst in Enterprise Workforce Real Time Management, ABS, I developed a quality assurance process to move resources to their default position as endorsed by the business. This was implemented on the RTM daily tasks, which enhanced resource demand and supply, resolved operational issues, reduced overtime by 5% and slashed workload, allowing the entire area to manage competing priorities and improve quality results.

As Customer Service Officer, ABS, I worked with customers requiring an explanation relating to statistical information, Health Statistics. Not trained in the area, I used my own time to successfully gain a comprehensive understanding of the health area, including relevant legislation. I used this knowledge of the health work/legislation, to apply this to individual cases and successfully analyse complex facts and come to the right conclusion for client. For example: the identification of discrepancies in reporting and health risk factors. Using an objective analysis of facts and interpreting legislation, I was able to assist customers and ensure that customers had a comprehensive understanding of significant policy questions.

I have excellent written and oral communication skills. As an RTM, ABS I developed a Reference guide consolidating all team materials during the transition phase from RTM to TAR. This involved communicating directly with team members to gain feedback, negotiating with site Directors and Senior Executives and consulting widely with relevant stakeholders. I subsequently wrote an effective guide, with a brief introduction, ensuring material clearly outlined the process for those not familiar with the topic, provided headings and graphics and logically wrote a clear step-by-step process. Due to my clarity of communications, I was able to ensure a highly effective reference guide that delivered a more structured and consistent approach, which has also been incorporated by other BSL's as a model. This has improved employees understanding of the business processes and procedures, which has enhanced knowledge, increased efficiencies and maintained quality and consistency of daily RTM work.

I have the capacity to successfully work with diverse stakeholders. In my current role as an Analyst in RTM, I manage the front desk to monitor inbound and outbound queues to maintain call flow and resolve discrepancies in resource demand and supply. In this position, the inbound and outbound call environment was impacted due to a site outage. To ensure effective service delivery, I quickly worked with diverse stakeholders, including: working directly with site directors to move off phone assistant resources to telephony work and moving coaches to phone support; I kept stakeholders up-to date on the rescheduling of training and team members and moved available resources to priority work types; Arms support and deployed out staff to assist with telephone work - directly engaging with and consulting with the Director and Senior Executives. As a result of this engagement and enacting RTM endorsed strategies, I was able to consolidate the site to a common goal and effectively consult with senior staff. This resulted in meeting service levels (90% of calls answered within 2 minutes), in spite of the site outage.

Finally, I note that I have a relevant degree in the statistical field (Bachelor of Science in Maths and Statistics) and I'm currently completing a Master of Data Science.

These types of statements, in particular statements with word limits are increasingly common and some of the word limits are VERY tight, so in chapter 18, I explain how to write effective statements when you have a very tight word count.

Chapter 16

Addressing the Integrated Leadership System and other capability frameworks

Quite a few departments / agencies use **generic selection criteria**, which apply to all roles, with the only variation relating to technical or specific knowledge related to the role and work level standards (different performance criteria, depending on classification level).

The most common generic selection criteria you will find are those relating to the **Integrated Leadership System** and **Work Level Standards**, which outlines the criteria and work level standards for APS level and executive level classifications (federal government).

However, while a federal framework, you will find this framework used at the state level, in some universities, and I have even seen versions of this framework in the private sector.

For example: In Western Australia, there is a variation of the Integrated Leadership System that utilises shapes and manages strategy, achieves results, builds productive relationships, exemplifies personal integrity and self-awareness and communicates and influences effectively, for Level 7 to Class 4.

The Integrated Leadership System

Shapes Strategic Thinking

- ~ Supports shared purpose and direction
- ~ Thinks strategically
- ~ Harnesses information and opportunities
- ~ Shows judgement, intelligence and common-sense

Achieves Results

- ~ Identified and uses resource wisely
- ~ Applies and builds professional expertise
- ~ Responds positively to change
- ~ Takes responsibility for managing work projects to achieve results

Supports Productive Working Relationships

- ~ Nurtures internal and external relationships
- ~ Listens to, understands and recognises the needs of others
- ~ Values individual differences and diversity
- ~ Shares learning and supports others

Exemplifies personal drive and integrity

- ~ Demonstrates public service professionalism and probity
- ~ Engages with risk and shows personal courage
- ~ Commits to action
- ~ Demonstrates self awareness and a commitment to personal development

Communicates with Influence

- ~ Communicates clearly

- ~ Listens, understands and adapts to audience
- ~ Negotiates persuasively

(*Source – Australian Public Service Commission 2019)

As previously mentioned at the state level, you will also encounter capability frameworks. For example, for NSW, each capability is made up of the following components:

Capability:

Communication

Description:

Listens, interprets and conveys information in a clear and accurate manner, provides timely delivery of information and selects the most appropriate method of communication.

Elements

Utilised written communication effectively
 Communicates verbally
 Presents and facilitates
 Influences and negotiates

Behavioural Criteria Levels

Generally, each capability has 6 levels, (4 for Leadership and Management Capabilities) which describe levels of behaviour, which are to be demonstrated at a particular level.

And for Queensland, you have the Leadership Competencies, comprising of the following:

Vision

Leaders strategically
 Stimulates ideas and innovation
 Leads change in complex environments
 Makes insightful decisions

Results

Develops and mobilises talent
 Builds enduring relationships
 Inspires others
 Derives accountability and outcomes

Accountability

Fosters healthy and inclusive workplaces
 Pursues continuous growth
 Demonstrates sound governance

Make sure you are sufficiently qualified

An error many people make, is reviewing the Integrated Leadership System and other capability frameworks and to assume because they meet the broad requirements regarding the generic requirements e.g. 'Communicates with Influence', or 'Communicates verbally', that they are qualified for the position. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Ways to gauge your suitability include:

- ~ Have you got demonstrable experience and knowledge relating to the majority of duties and responsibilities listed in the position description?
- ~ Are you confident you can answer these within the context of the role description?

The KEY to addressing the Integrated Leadership System and other capability frameworks is to address them within the context of the position in question and to provide tangible evidence of your achievements.

For example, if you are from the **Australian Federal Police (AFP)** and you are applying for a team leader position in investigations, you will need to shape your application in a way that demonstrates how you will be able to perform the duties of an inspector, by highlighting your investigative and leadership skills within the AFP.

For example, under **Cultivate Productive Working Relationships**, your response would need to be framed around providing evidence relating to nurturing relevant working relationships in the area of investigations, such as working with SAPOL (including specialist investigation areas, local CIB's and the State Intelligence Branch), Australian Tax Office, Department of Home Affairs, Magistrates, Registries and so on.

Likewise, if you were **Marketing Manager**, under **Cultivate Productive Working Relationships**, you would outline evidence relating to nurturing and building client relationships, working effectively with management and building and developing an effective sale and marketing team.

The **biggest mistake** candidates make when addressing generic criteria, is the failure to directly address the requirements of the position. That is, marrying the job profile, with the capability framework. Keep in mind that providing evidence in relation to an entirely different sector or role can result in you not being selected for an interview.

You must provide evidence (examples of work history) that is relevant to the advertised position.

If applying for a promotion or executive position

Understand the basis on which an agency or department assesses these applications, before you even start applying for a promotion or executive positions.

Have a detailed look at the Framework, relating to both hard and soft skills and identify those areas in which you have a skills or leadership gap. By doing so you will be able to judge what areas you need to improve, in order to ascend through the classification levels. Major skills at the senior executive level include change management, whole-of-government challenges, strategic leadership, government finance, policy management, presenting at parliamentary committees, and understanding the regulatory environment.

Self-assessment tools and guides are available on the Australian Service Commission website (federal level).

You don't need to address each sub-criterion and every behavioural criteria level under a separate heading.

When addressing these generic selection criteria, it is not necessary to address each sub-criterion under a separate heading, as long as you provide concrete evidence of each sub-criterion in the examples that you provide the selection panel.

Focus on your achievements

Contributions, contributions, contributions – is my constant mantra, in particular at the senior levels.

If applying for an executive position, you need to show in-depth, quantifiable achievements across all criteria and the more outcomes focused the better. At this level, it is about shaping and making high-level contributions, so you won't nail it unless you have a quantifiable pattern of achievement and you can demonstrate this throughout your application.

Use a STAR or CAR

As with addressing selection criteria more generally, no matter what assessment framework is being used and even if they don't mention using a STAR, or CAR in the application pack, use one of these methodologies, as it forces you to provide evidence.

If you don't know what a STAR or CAR is, (as you have skipped to this chapter), go back immediately to Chapter 1, as understanding these methodologies is vital.

See a couple of examples below of addressing the Integrated Leadership System:

- Shapes Strategic Thinking
- Exemplifies Personal Drive and Integrity (most people write very poorly against this section of the integrated framework, which is why I have included a specific example).

SC 1 – Shapes strategic thinking

- ~ ***Inspires a sense of purpose and direction***
- ~ ***Focuses strategically***
- ~ ***Harnesses information and opportunities***
- ~ ***Shows judgment, intelligence and commonsense***

Possessing well-developed strategic leadership skills, acquired in a variety of roles within both the private and public sector I have been able to effectively drive an initiative or project to fulfilment, at the same time gaining support from peers and staff to ensure successful outcomes.

This is evident in my current role as **Senior Manager EL1** at the Department of Home Affairs. Within this role, I have provided leadership in relating to data reporting, both within the Department and whole-of-government initiatives. This has involved establishing area direction and preparing plans that analyse all available facts and reflect Home Affairs goals and organisational priorities. This has included identifying, developing and articulating outcomes that are realistic, measurable and consistent with government requirements, including understanding current key issues and how they impact on the area, recognising the need to anticipate future challenges and the necessity to create flexibility in order to ensure ongoing sustainability.

Relevant plans and policies I have created within the area have included:

- ~ The development and implementation of a communication strategy within the branch. This complex strategy successfully highlighted the failure of various sections to communicate effectively and involved addressing the problem from the perspective of what Home Affairs requires, at the same time understanding the complex interplay and political environment in relation to the inter-relationships between different stakeholder and client groups within the department.
- ~ The development of policy for enterprise data capability for the department, including keeping abreast of shifts in the environment and bringing a businesslike orientation into the area. This included the use of reporting services, the use of 'remoteness classification' for funding arrangement and data and metadata issues.
- ~ Collaboratively contributing to the strategic direction regarding reporting, in particular the Home Affairs Online Management System (OMS), which utilises several complex business intelligence tools in relation to the delivery of financial reports to the Department. This included providing relevant training to

members of the Executive Management Group on the reporting components of OMS.

- ~ I spearheaded the established of the whole-of-government Socio-Economic Working Group for data enabling the government. This was as the result of the need to build organisational capability and through this working group, collective minds are now assessing a range of potential solutions and taking a logical approach to problem solving, at the same time-sharing resources. Beneficial results have included significant enhancement of the process and resource sharing amongst socio-economic agencies.
- ~ I successfully developed a quality assurance process for outgoing work, ensuring that business area coordinators now understand and are committed to the quality initiatives, designed to provide high quality reporting for the Minister's office.

As a result of my ability to shape strategic thinking within the area, I have been able to establish processes that are clearly linked to business and departmental outcomes. I have also been able to ensure that the functional area resources are directed in a way that contributes to the achievements of the area outcomes.

Exemplifies personal drive and integrity

- ~ Demonstrates public service professionalism and probity
- ~ Engages with risk and shows personal courage
- ~ Commits to action
- ~ Demonstrates self-awareness and a commitment to personal development

I bring to the position public service professionalism, with a commitment to action.

As **Director, Field Services APUT**, I was confronted upon arrival with major performance issues, with the IT service providing a highly fragmented and disorganised service. Being determined, highly motivated and action oriented, I took personal responsibility for fixing this problem, including establishing an IT business plan, ICT workforce plan, service level standards, communication guidelines and a staff performance framework. I also made tough business decisions in the best interest of the organisation and offered frank and impartial advice. As a result of driving change in the IT section, I was able to transform this portfolio - with the IT team achieving exceptional results, including:

- A **92% approval rating**, in spite of out-of-date equipment.
- The IT team winning **Principal Member Award** in 2017.
- The Deputy Registrar, Glenn Mull, noted in a review that *'The IT section is seen as being one of the most vital and best performing areas of the APUT.'*

I am resilient to setbacks and my tenacity and persistence and ability to show personal courage is reflected throughout my career. As **Services Manager, Xbox** I commenced at a time when there had been a major restructure, including redundancies. In this position I fostered a culture of accountability and was persistent in implementing changes, at the same time reducing the negative impact of redundancies across the office by building staff resilience. This involved tenacity, persistence and working hard to achieve objectives. As a result, I was able to gain staff trust and move forward with a range of changes and projects that have supported Xbox business objectives.

I ensure that I maintain high levels of levels of competence, by maintaining the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake leadership roles. This has included for example the recent completion of professional development course to keep abreast with change and innovation, including **Agile Project Management, e-business and Leadership at the Executive Level**. This has provided the toolbox learning required to make rapid adjustments as needed, essential in complex projects and

programs and ensuring that more stakeholder needs are met at low cost within government.

Chapter 17

Graduate applications

Graduate applications at federal, state and territory level are **fiercely competitive, with thousands of graduates applying for a limited number of positions within each agency.**

Most of the advice and tips already outlined in this manual, will also apply to graduate candidates. I have covered additional material below and have reinforced some important issues, which are specific to graduate applications.

Tip 1 – ‘Grades aren’t enough babe!’

It was a long time ago, but I still clearly remember how competitive graduate programs were, and how the whole focus seemed to evolve around ‘grades received’ (and what grades everyone else was receiving), and the purchase of a designer suit in anticipation of being offered an interview.

While grades are often used as an initial ‘culling process’ in the private sector, in the public sector they are only one component of your application. To get selected for the short list, your application needs to be strong and professional throughout.

Also keep in mind that one of the annoyances of recruiters is the **entitlement mentality** – namely, ‘I have high grades and an honours degree, so what can you do for me?’

Remember, your focus should always be on the needs of the agency. By addressing their needs, your own needs will in turn be met by way of training and an opportunity to gain valuable experience.

Tip 2 – Focus on the quality of your evidence

Whether you need to address behavioural questions or selection criteria one of the most common failings of graduate applications is the poor quality of examples provided.

While as a graduate you won’t have a large arsenal of evidence-based examples you can draw upon, you can still develop strong claims by:

- ~ Providing examples of your experience gained in volunteer roles (if you don’t have voluntary experience, then I advise you obtain this experience).
- ~ Using transferable skills developed while working in part-time jobs, holiday jobs etc.
- ~ Utilising knowledge gained while completing your degree.
- ~ Utilising any practical working examples obtained while working on joint assignments, undertaking research papers, field research or completing practical modules.

Tip 3 – Be innovative when using examples

One way to ensure you stand apart from the rest of the graduate pack is to integrate practical working examples, instead of using examples almost every graduate uses.

For example, just about every graduate I know refers to their ability to write essays and research papers, when addressing selection criteria or behavioural questions in relation to communication skills. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this answer, it is difficult to frame a brilliant response around essay writing, and essay writing has very little to do with an ability to write memorandums, brief management, write clear emails, or communicate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders, including clients.

Instead, focus on **working examples** and exploit what limited experience you have, in the same way as someone with ten years post-graduate experience addresses application requirements, by using strong evidence-based examples.

Example:

The example below drew upon a one month, part time voluntary role undertaken by a graduate.

SC 4

Demonstrate how you have utilised your highly developed communication skills

I have well-developed influential communication skills and would be able to meet all administrative requirements of this role.

In my role at Salvation Army, I was responsible for assisting in the facilitation of the Young Parents' Project. Within a limited timeframe, I undertook a service mapping exercise in order to identify the existing services available for young parents within the region, created a comprehensive service directory and identified the various strengths and gaps in the service. This involved actively listening to representatives of community groups, including creating opportunities to listen to diverse input, documenting the process in writing, keeping management up-to-date and informed (both orally and in writing) and engaging in constructive discussions with various NFP, including discussing the viability of the proposal.

As a result of my effective communication skills, I was able to successfully communicate to stakeholders, and provide a comprehensive, coherent and unambiguous service directory, which is currently in use at Salvation Army.

Tip 4 – Incorporate your understanding of the agency and the role, when addressing selection criteria or behavioural questions

Although I have already covered this in Chapter 11, Number four, I emphasise it again, as it is important to ensure that you don't try to write a one-size-fits-all application, but tailor each application to target different types of agencies.

Graduates who meet agency requirements are much more likely to get interviews, even if their grades are not High Distinction.

So, when writing a sizzling response to a graduate position:

- ~ Think of benefits you can bring to the organisation that meet the agency's requirements.
- ~ Research, research, research and obtain a clear understanding of the agency and advertised graduate program.
- ~ Substantiate all claims with relevant examples and highlight your accomplishments

Example:

Listed below is an example of a graduate, who had limited experience, but through the utilisation of his transferable skills in voluntary roles, and by incorporating an understanding of what would be required of him in representing the agency in the community, he secured an interview which resulted in his successful appointment as a Youth Support Worker.

SC 5 – Youth Support Worker

Demonstrate how you would be able to represent the agency in the community to enhance position and profile

I have the relevant skills and attributes necessary to represent the agency in the community to enhance position and profile.

Profile and position among agencies and schools

In my role at Youth Australia, I was responsible for assisting in the facilitation of the Parents Project, an initiative targeted at building capacity in a disadvantaged community sector, namely the high-risk sector of young parents. A key part of this role was representing Youth Australia while networking extensively with service providers within the region to create a comprehensive service directory, obtain feedback on the initiative and provide service providers with information relating to the program.

In representing Youth Australia:

- ~ I ensured appropriate professionalism and probity, including being consistently genuine in my interactions with others and showing a personal commitment and loyalty to the program.
- ~ I promoted the program's vision, goals and objectives to a diverse range of stakeholders, including community organisations, non-profit groups, employment agencies, Indigenous services and government departments.
- ~ I communicated information relevant to the program in a relevant and effective manner.

Cont:

As Youth Support Worker, I would promote the service, including ensuring appropriate professionalism, commitment and effective networking. I would:

- ~ Help market the program, through promotional materials such as information brochures
- ~ Liaise extensively with relevant stakeholders, including nurturing a wide range of contacts and alliances with agencies and schools
- ~ I would ensure consistent communication with relevant stakeholders, including providing information on the program, as well as keeping people up to date, by establishing both formal and informal communication channels and keeping all stakeholders fully informed (both schools and agencies).

Profile and position among the Youth and Disadvantaged Communities

As a volunteer at the Salvation Army Service, I provided support to Youth Workers and a diverse range of youth, utilising the outreach centre. In this role I promoted the services at the centre by actively communicating with and working with disadvantaged youth. This included:

- ~ Clearly communicating to youth, the relevant services available at the centre
- ~ Treating all clients with respect and courtesy, regardless of their behaviour and ensuring that I did not show favouritism or bias when dealing with people
- ~ Being open, ethical, and honest
- ~ Being accountable and adhering to sound practice
- ~ Ensuring that young people were made to feel welcome and important as a human being.

As Youth Support Worker, I would enhance the profile and position by ensuring that I:

- ~ Am approachable at all times to discuss problems and provide full support in overcoming obstacles.
- ~ Provide a commitment to client service, including responding to feedback and providing empathetic and non-judgmental support
- ~ Act with integrity at all times

I am confident that my professionalism, strong interpersonal skills, ability to communicate, network and build relationships with key stakeholders, will enable me to enhance the position and profile of the program and agency.

PART SEVEN

SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS

Chapter 18

Addressing applications where a strict word or character limits apply

Many agencies now restrict the number of words or characters (if online) per selection criteria or statement of claim. These can range from a little as 80 words per criterion, 400 words per criterion, or as little as 700 words in total for a statement of claim.

I personally love addressing applications where a word limit applies, as I know exactly what the agency requires, and it helps narrow the focus down to the bare essentials.

Below are my key tips for addressing selection criteria, behavioural questions, EOI or statement of claim, where a word limit applies.

Tip One - Make every word count

As you are limited to a word count, you must ensure that you make every word count, so you can make a strong and compelling case for the selection panel.

You also need to be aware, that while a word limit applies to many candidates' applications, the marking instructions provided to selection panel members can run into several pages, even though you are restricted to 80 – 500 words.

When writing against these applications:

- ~ Make sure you address the needs of your audience, by providing evidence that meets the requirements of the department or agency. Ask yourself whether your information is relevant to the job and selection criteria, and is it something the selection panel would be interested in.
- ~ Be succinct, by removing information that is repetitive or irrelevant. Go back to looking at the needs of your audience and ask yourself: is the information critical and if it was left out, would it jeopardize your application?
- ~ Make sure that everything you write is clear and concise. This includes removing obscure sentences and confusing terminology.
- ~ If the word count is very tight, focus on achievements. In so doing you provide written evidence of how you could potentially contribute to an organisation, rather than focusing on activities, that simply outlines how you performed the job.

Tip Two - Prune

If you run out of words to express all your relevant points, then carefully re-read your responses in order to spot redundancies.

- ~ Delete concepts that repeat themselves or don't directly answer the criterion or requirements of the position.
- ~ Use abbreviations and acronyms if related to the agency (this assists if you are restricted to a character count with an online application).
- ~ Avoid lengthy openings and conclusions, or if the word limit is very tight, remove them altogether.
- ~ Avoid fluff and waffle – (while you should adapt this approach for all applications, it becomes even more imperative when a word limit applies).

~ Keep sentences short and direct.

Tip Three - Use good English

Some candidates panic, and prune so vigorously, that all accepted grammatical form and sentence structure disappears. This results in a response that is at best difficult to read, at worst, completely incoherent. Just because a word limit applies, does not mean the use of good English should disappear.

Tip Four - Use bullet points for actions and results

Another mistake candidates make is thinking a word or page limit equates to squeezing everything in, without using a clear layout. While a bullet point equates to a word, by using bullet points, you can use short sharp sentences and enhance the layout of the document.

Tip Five - Adhere to the word or character limit

While some agencies allow some flexibility if you run slightly over the word limit, (up to 20% on some forms), others have a strict policy of not accepting the application. Also note that many online applications are such that it is impossible for you to go over a character limit.

When conforming to a word count, it is usually not necessary to include the actual selection criteria question in your word count.

Tip Four - Don't address each sub-criterion under a separate heading

It is not necessary to address each sub-criterion as a separate heading (unless specified). Instead use one or two STAR or CAR that highlights how you meet all the relevant sub-criteria.

I have used an example on the following page to highlight this technique. You will see how I have used the A of the STAR selection criteria model to highlight how this candidate meets all of the sub-criteria. (I actually use a checklist and run through it to ensure that each and every sub-criterion is satisfactorily met).

I also used the heading 'Results', rather than a full sentence, which further reduced the word count.

The example on the next page pertains to a training role at the Australian Border Force for Customs & Quarantine Services, with a word limit of 400. This type of statement is not that common, but gives you an idea of how one example can cover multiple sub-points under one selection criterion.

Example:

SC 1

Managerial and Planning

Ability to effectively organise, plan and deliver services to:

- ~ **Manage and prioritise multiple demands**
- ~ **Contribute to work area planning**
- ~ **Contribute to and be responsible for achieving team goals**
- ~ **Manage resources**
- ~ **Develop policy and guidelines and action plans**
- ~ **Manage projects and contracts**

I have the ability to plan activities and achieve results, by systematically tracking progress, determining direction and building capability through flexible resourcing options and the development of guidelines and policy.

As Training Manager, I am responsible for the management and planning of all activities relating to the Training School. This includes planning training activities and allocating financial and other resources, ensuring ideas and actions become a reality, managing a team of Instructors, and developing policy relating to the school. This has involved:

- ~ Management and implementation of all training activities, including planning area activities and allocating financial and other resources, establishing priorities, risk management, building in check points and systematic controls to monitor implementation, conceptualisation and planning, project management, logistics, and the development of timelines for the design and implementation of training schedules and packages.
- ~ Development of a flexible team model including supervision of eight Instructors. This has involved delegating tasks equitably, clearly communicating to team members and ensuring staff compliance with relevant legislative, policy and regulatory frameworks.
- ~ Initiating flexible resourcing options and responding to various stakeholder requirements and changing circumstances as they arise, including reviewing training plans and adjusting resources relating to changing needs and in line with Senior Management task directives
- ~ Management of training activities within a financial allocation, including determining and negotiating resource requirements in the context of organisational priorities and budgets and planning the School training schedule in accordance with the Net Training Liability course curriculum.
- ~ Resource management (equipment, IT, facilities, course resources, HR Resources and organisational capability resources).
- ~ Development of policy and guidelines relating to training, including stipulating procedures and training protocols, and providing continuous feedback and expert advice to the Training Cycle.
- ~ Management of all contracts and projects, including those relating to the procurements of resources. This has included the successful procurement of an array of new detection, protection and decontamination equipment for the organisation.

Results

- ~ The successful and effective management of the services of the School, including the introduction of improved curriculum and policy relating to OH & S requirements.
- ~ Effective management and procurement of resources, including reduction of operating costs by 20%.

Short succinct statements

Some agencies require only a paragraph for each selection criteria. In this case, provide a very short and succinct STAR example.

Examples:

Word limit 120 per Key Selection Criteria – Administration Support Officer

Key Selection Criteria 1

Experience in the operation of keyboard equipment and the performance of associated data entry and word processing tasks

I have a high level of word processing and PC software skills, including MS Office suite of products, including Word, Excel, Outlook and the use of database fundamentals. As Case Officer with the Department of Immigration Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs, I used a range of MS Office suite products, including Word for drafting reports, data entry of applicant's details, use of email for both internal and external correspondence and use of the intranet for information purposes. Skills utilised included word processing skills, and the extensive use of keyboard including entry techniques and the use of keystroke shortcuts. I ensured the accurate entry of information and I was able to use technology to streamline operations.

Qualifications: Advanced Diploma Information Technology 2001

Word Count used in this response 120

(Note: I have incorporated the word counts, so you could see how I strictly adhered to the requirements, as these were online applications)

Chapter 19

Addressing poorly developed selection criteria

In Chapter One, I outlined the reality of the process, including advertised positions that have poorly developed selection criteria. In this chapter, I cover how to overcome problems related to addressing these poorly developed selection criteria.

Repetition of skills, personal qualities and knowledge

It is not uncommon to find the repetition of the same skill, personal quality or knowledge or technical expertise in one or more criterion. For example, I completed selection criteria for a Finance Accountant, with the following criteria:

Selection Criteria 1

Possess good communication, organisational, interpersonal and planning skills

Selection Criteria 9

Competent organisational and planning skills

Both of these criteria involve skills relating to organisational and planning skills.

Solution:

Provide a separate evidence-based example for each criterion relating to the same skills, personal quality or knowledge. Try not to repeat the same information and don't refer panel members to the criterion with the duplicate requirement.

It is also a good idea to go back to the duties and responsibilities of the position, to see exactly what the requirements are, which might explain some of the duplication. However, in most cases, it is an oversight of panel members, who do not understand the criterion in question, or have hastily put the application together using old application templates and without much care or thought about the process.

Too many selection criteria

I have lost count of the number of applications I have completed involving twenty or more selection criteria, or there are more than six parts to each criterion. If you have an application in front of you that looks more like 'War and Peace' then you are not alone, as there are still a small number of advertised applications out there that are unnecessarily complicated and long.

Solution:

- ~ Answer all the sub-criteria utilising one or two STARs, or CARs (see example relating to addressing selection criteria, where a word limit applies).
- ~ Keep all your responses brief and to the point and if concepts repeat themselves, eliminate them.
- ~ The more criteria you have to address, the shorter your response should be for each criterion. For example, if you are required to address 20 selection criteria separately, limit your response to no more than a couple of succinct paragraphs per criterion.

Selection criteria that are difficult to understand

One of the largest gripes from clients is poorly worded and difficult to understand selection criteria. Since one of the major keys to addressing selection criteria is to understand and then address all the criteria, this can become highly problematic for you.

Solution:

If you don't understand the selection criteria, even after reading them within the context of the duties and responsibilities, then the only way forward is to touch base with the contact officer.

Selection criteria containing spelling mistakes and poor grammar

Although irksome, ignore spelling mistakes and certainly don't point these out to panel members.

My particular annoyance is the use of American spelling within documents, such as organization, instead of organisation.

Chapter 20

Online Applications

These days the majority of agencies/departments require applications to be completed online, which sometimes entails one application form in which you provide information that you would normally include in your résumé, cover letter, cover application sheet and your document addressing the selection criteria (assessment criteria, expression of interest, statement of claim etc.).

- ~ If selection criteria, or behavioural questions, need to be answered online, simply apply the same rules you would employ if you were addressing them in a separate word document, subject to formatting rules.
- ~ The easiest way of addressing online applications that have application forms is to create a word document when developing your claims against the selection criteria or writing against other requirements, such as work-related questions. This will give you more flexibility and speed while formatting your responses, allow you to do grammar and spell checks, and lets you save the file easily in case something goes wrong.
- ~ If using a word processing program, such as MS Word to draft your responses, **DO NOT** use auto formatting, such as *italics*, **bolding**, underlining, or other automatic formatting allowed in your word processing. These features get stripped or transformed into weird character combinations when your application is copied and posted online. Basically, you are working within the limitations of what you see on your keyboard.

For example, you will need to replace any bullets with ASCII- supported keyboard characters (if it appears on your keyboard, it's an ASCII character). For example, use an asterisks (*), or (~), which is located on the left hand side of the number 1. (I use the ~ bullet point in all of my work, so I don't need to worry about clients submitting applications online).

- ~ Online applications usually restrict the number of characters or words. If you go over the character or word count, your application could be rejected when you try to submit it online (not all applications, as some allow a small margin). Remember, a bullet point is counted as a word or character online.
- ~ If a form is provided online, it is not necessary to copy the selection criteria statement, as this is already provided.
- ~ Once satisfied with your word document, cut, copy and paste onto the online application form.
- ~ When completing your résumé online, make use of the 'additional information' sections, to really highlight your achievements and contributions.

Chapter 21

Solutions to other common problems

Length of response per selection criteria, where no word or character limit is prescribed

Quite a few clients ask me how long their application should be, and while there are no hard and fast rules, I suggest the following:

- ~ **NEVER under any circumstances, exceed more than one page per criterion.** While some organisations, in particular Universities are used to and expect, long and tedious responses, the general trend is that long, and complicated selection criteria are becoming a thing of the past.

Remember, real people read these applications and long applications, usually contain unnecessary waffle, which will either send your reader to sleep, or encourage a reader to skim through your application. (Keep in mind, some selection panel members need to read hundreds and occasionally up to a thousand applications or more).

Your focus should always be on quality, not quantity!

- ~ The higher the level of classification, the more evidence you will need to provide of your skills, achievements and contributions. At the senior level I'm writing between 1/2 a page and 1 page per criterion (no more).
- ~ At mid classification level, half a page per selection criteria is more than sufficient.
- ~ The more criteria you have to address, the shorter your response should be for each criterion. So, for example, if you are required to address twenty separate selection criteria, limit your response to one \ succinct paragraphs per selection criteria.
- ~ If you need to address several sub-criteria, then unless you are specifically advised that you need to address each sub-criterion separately, address them using a couple of STAR examples, as outlined in Chapter 16. That way, you will still be addressing the agency's requirements, without having to write 'War and Peace'

Adding 'meat on the bone' for criteria you are weak on

Occasionally, you will come across an application where you are the perfect fit, but are weak on one criterion, or some of the desirables.

If this is the case, and you feel strongly that this is the role for you, then so long as you are strong in all other areas of the application, use these techniques below to create a compelling case, even if this criterion is your 'weakest link'.

Research, Research, Research

Whenever my client is weak on a particular area, I research thoroughly what the actual requirements are, and then incorporate this research into the application.

For further information on research and how to incorporate this within your selection criteria, refer to Chapter 11.

Use Transferable Skills

While you may not have the specific skills required, you can effectively use transferable skills to highlight how you meet the criterion in question.

Example:

This example related to project management in the conservation arena.

While my client had no direct experience in project management within this sector, I used a range of transferable skills to highlight his ability to undertake the role. My client was shortlisted.

I also have a range of transferable skills, from my legal background, which will enable me to effectively manage projects and support and lead a team. In my current role as Claims Manager – Clifford & Brown, I successfully led the project management of the development and implementation of a complex claims database, as well as maintain five separate databases across separate lines of Insurance.

In delivering this complex project, I managed project development, including monitoring timelines and budgets, actively engaged with IT to meet project and business outcomes, steered the change, including evaluating the effectiveness of the database and provided technical, strategic and business advice to the partnership.

Results from the effective project management of the database included increased efficiency, allowing me to successfully fulfil all requirements of the role, previously requiring two people. There has also been a significant improvement in services delivered to major business clients.

Don't state that you don't meet the criterion

I never highlight my client's weakness in any area, and I strongly suggest you don't either.

You should treat your application in the same way as an advertiser writes motivational copy about their goods and services. That is, you highlight what you can offer, NOT what you can't offer and ensure that you indirectly and directly meet the agency's needs and requirements.

DON'T under any circumstances, start or conclude your response with a statement such as:

While I have not as yet learnt or worked on cabinet processes, senate estimates or questions on notice, I am willing to learn and confident in my ability to do so.

By so doing, you could be putting the final nail in the coffin of your application being relegated to the 'not for interview list'.

Example:

Below is an example, of how I used research and transferable skills to develop a case for a client, who had no experience in preparing and presenting evidence to the courts. This client secured an interview!

SC 6**Demonstrable ability to prepare and present expert evidence to courts, inquiries or tribunals**

I have the ability to prepare expert evidence for courts, inquiries or tribunals and have an understanding of the judicial processes, interpretations and conventions that must be complied with in carrying out investigatory activities and preparing expert evidence to courts.

At Stevenson, I was seconded to the National Insolvency Coordination Unit of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. In this role, my primary responsibility was the investigation and review of the level of compliance by directors of their duties under the *Corporations Act 2001*. In this position, I prepared detailed affidavits for referral to the Australian Securities and Investment Commission's enforcement unit, and this involved a detailed knowledge of relevant provision of the Corporations Act, along with the ability to effectively draft affidavits for presentation to court.

I have also prepared the following when undertaking work relating to insolvency matters:

Preparation of Public Examination

This involved the detailed preparation of evidence under Division 1 of Part 5.9 of the Corporations Law (Sections 596A – 597B) in relation to Public Examinations of persons concerning the examinable affairs of corporations.

This included the preparation of a material in such a way to ensure that it was unlikely to be challenged on the basis of inappropriate evidence, relating to examinable affairs contained in s 9 – 53 of the *Corporation Law*, along with ensuring the matter would not be challenged in regard to the ASIC authority to conduct a public examination under the Act.

Preparation of Insolvency Reports

I was involved in the preparation of detailed Insolvency Reports, which included the preparation of evidence and claims for submission to court.

I also have the ability to present expert evidence to court and understand the basis of acting as an expert witness. For example:

- ~ It must be agreed or demonstrated that I have a field of specialised knowledge.
- ~ I must demonstrate that I am an expert in an aspect of the specialised knowledge by reason of specialised training, study or experience.
- ~ My opinion must be based wholly or substantially on my expert knowledge.
- ~ The facts that I base my opinion on, must be established as evidence.
- ~ It must be established that the facts on which my opinion is based form a proper foundation for it.
- ~ I must clearly explain the logical basis of my opinion and how it relates to the established evidence in my expert knowledge.
- ~ I must abide by the expert witness code of conduct that is required in Queensland and Federal proceedings. This code requires an expert to set out facts and matters upon which each opinion expressed in the report is based and any investigations by any other party upon which the expert report relies.

This knowledge is enhanced by my extensive experience in public speaking relating to specialist matters. This has included providing lectures and internal training on a range of specialist subjects, including insolvency administration.

As a Senior Financial Investigator, I am confident that I would be able to integrate relevant financial evidence with other components of the investigation, prepare briefs of evidence, statements of witnesses, affidavits and reports and provide expert evidence before courts, inquiries or tribunals.

PART SIX

USEFUL TIPS, RESOURCES

Chapter 22

Turbo-boosting your writing output

Writing quality responses to selection criteria and job applications can be a time-consuming exercise. Many of my clients have spent every waking moment outside of work developing and writing responses to selection criteria. Even as a professional I find them time consuming, having never been able to get a full application out in less than a day's work, (even some entry level applications), and occasionally spending a couple of full days on one client file, if I'm writing at a very senior level.

There are days when I can sit down at my computer and effortlessly crank out page after page, seamlessly addressing applications for my clients. Sometimes, I can even work for four to five hours without taking a break and 'nail' even complex applications in a relatively short time.

Days like that are productive and invigorating, but like all professionals who write for a living, other days are painfully sluggish and unproductive, to the point where I end up 'writing off time' on client files.

However, over the years, I've used some simple techniques for kick-starting and sustaining output, which I am going to share with you to help turbo-boost your writing when addressing selection criteria.

Number One – Just write

Once you have developed a framework and you have some idea as to what you want to write, then **write quickly from the opening sentence to the end without a break.** It doesn't matter if you write long hand or use a word processor; the key is not to stop, even for a few seconds, to edit or to criticize what you have written.

I love the Mel Robbins, 5-second rule, namely when you feel yourself hesitating about writing (or doing something that you know you should do), just count 5-4-3-2-1-GO and move towards action (namely writing).

This is not fine literature. Keep it simple and keep it direct. Remember getting those first words out is the toughest part of the process, so leave the critical editing until after you get your thoughts down on paper. Once you have finished writing:

- ~ Read over your responses and start doing some editing and fine-tuning, including moving sentences and paragraphs where necessary.
- ~ Go over what you have written and ensure it addresses the requirements of the selection criteria and other job requirements.
- ~ Ask yourself if the response adequately promotes you as a candidate, with a large injection of achievements and contributions
- ~ Take a break and put the application aside for a day, then go back to it with fresh eyes to make corrections, additions and alterations.

Number Two - Tackle the easy criteria first

I always 'knock over' the easy selection criteria first, which allows the brain to warm up to the task at hand. It also allows me time to come to grips with the remainder of the application.

Number Three – Find your ‘Peak Writing Hours’

We all have different bio-rhythms - which mean, we all have a peak time of productivity, when output soars and both quantity and quality is high. By identifying your own peak periods, you will not only increase the quality of your application, but you will reduce the time it takes for you to create your responses.

I find I am most productive between the hours of 5am and 2.30 - 3pm. Conversely, I am at my most unproductive between 3pm and 7pm and anything after 9pm is a total write off. (I'm usually in bed by 9.30pm). Accordingly, I schedule my workday around these peak writing hours and leave the mundane administrative tasks of running a business during my off-peak hours.

Number Four – Work on two or more selection criterion at a time and/or more than one application at a time

I always work on more than one criterion at a time and occasionally on more than one application at a time. The benefits of doing so include, preventing the brain from becoming oversaturated in any one thing, and it will also allow you to re-focus and refresh your thoughts by moving onto another criterion.

If you get stuck on a criterion, don't sit there and lament on your inability to address it, move onto another criterion or application quickly. When you switch to another criterion or application, it enables you to turbo-boost your writing output, and **transfer ideas** throughout your application.

Number Five – Draft your résumé first

Don't waste time writing your cover letter, or statement of claim at the beginning. Skip it, and start with a draft résumé, as once this is in place, you have a list of achievements you can then use in your application.

Number Six – Keep a notepad handy at all times

The brain works in mysterious ways and usually when you are not working on the application your subconscious mind will be at work putting the pieces of the jigsaw together.

Often when you are most relaxed, or you are doing relatively 'brain dead' tasks, such as cleaning your teeth, weeding the garden, or washing the dishes, ideas will pop into your head.

To ensure you get these ideas on paper, make sure you have a small notepad where you can jot ideas down as quickly as possible.

So often solutions as to how to approach a complex criterion or recalling accomplishments from a role will suddenly pop into the head at the weirdest times! Usually, my weird time is first thing in the morning, when in a still half conscious and sleepy state of mind, I find the perfect solution to addressing a complex criterion for a client, or I will scribble down new ideas for my regular client e-zine 'Boost your Career'.

Chapter 23

Useful links and resources

Ways to obtain work in the Public Sector

There are several ways you can gain employment in the Public Sector:

- ~ Apply for a specific permanent (ongoing) job advertised in the ASP Jobs or various states and territory job websites, or major jobsites such as SEEK and LinkedIn.
- ~ Apply for temporary, contract (non-ongoing) roles advertised in the Gazette and various state websites
- ~ Apply for a role in government through a recruitment firm (via major job boards and LinkedIn)
- ~ Apply for role through an agency temporary register

All Government jobs and traineeships are posted online. Listed below are sites for federal government, state government and territory.

You will also on the odd occasion, find government jobs advertised in local and regional newspapers, for example in Queensland they are advertised in The Australian and The Courier Mail.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Australian Public Service Gazette

Ongoing jobs are published every Thursday in the APS Gazette

www.apsjobs.gov.au - is the entry point for all government departments

If you are interested in obtaining employment within a particular agency, then most agencies have recruiting information directly on their website.

STATE / TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Entry points for state and territory roles are as follows:

Queensland

www.smartjobs.qld.gov.au

New South Wales

www.jobs.nsw.gov.au

Western Australia

www.jobs.wa.gov.au

Tasmania

www.jobs.tas.gov.au

Victoria

www.careersvic.gov.au

Northern Territory

www.job.nt.gov.au

South Australia

www.iworkfor.sa.gov.au

ACT

www.jobs.act.gov.au

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

For Local Government jobs, refer to your local council web site, or www.job-directory.com.au, which is a good entry for local government jobs.

Additional Useful Resources

Australian Public Service Commission - Federal

<https://www.apsc.gov.au/>

The Australian Public Service Commission is your go to site for anything related to working in the Australian Public Service at the Federal level.

It not only outlines the Integrated Leadership System, but also provides an overview of employee requirements, such as Codes of Conduct, including expected social media conduct.

Australian Capital Territory, APS Employment Portal

<https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/employment-framework>

Provides direct access to the following:

- Agreements, awards and policies
- Tools and resources for managers, including understanding and navigating the ACTPS Employment framework and managers toolkit for people management and resolving workplace behaviour and performance.
- A centralised resource for ACTPS executives, including whole-of-government documentation, legislation and policies
- Access to HR documents, legislation and policy.
- The shared capability framework, which describes the skills, knowledge and behaviour expected of every ACT public servant.

Queensland Shared Services

<http://forgov.qld.gov.au/working-in-the-public-service>

Provides links for the following:

- About the public service
- Directives, awards and legislation
- Recruitment
- Induction and probation
- Leadership Hub
- Workforce Planning
- Conduct and Performance

Public Sector Commission Western Australia

<https://publicsector.wa.gov.au/>

Comprehensive resource providing guidance in regards to the leadership framework, recruitment and a gateway of information for existing employees, including Chief Executive Officers and Human Resource Officers.

Office of the Commission for Public Employment, Northern Territory

<https://ocpe.nt.gov.au/>

A central resource for the Northern Territory Workforce, including Aboriginal employment, information about NTPS employment, leadership and capability, public sector appeals, along with access to relevant publications, policy and guidelines.

State Service Management Office, Tasmanian Government

<http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo>

A division of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the office provides useful links for employment policy and advice, code of conduct and information for employees and senior executives.

Public Service Commission, New South Wales

<https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/>

The website is the main hub on working in the public sector in New South Wales, including leadership development, senior executive fundamentals, the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework and recruitment and selection.

Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment, South Australia

<https://publicsector.sa.gov.au/>

Gateway to everything you need in regard to working for government in South Australia, including codes of conduct, policy and leadership development.

Victorian Public Sector Commission

<https://vpssc.vic.gov.au/>

Provides a general overview of working for the Victorian Government, including links to legislation.