

Merit Instruction 6

Procedures for the use of external recruitment agencies/ consultants in filling vacancies

For some senior level vacancies it may, on occasion, be beneficial to engage an external recruitment agency or consultant to assist in, or coordinate, selection processes. Reasons for engagement of an external agency/consultant may include:

- where a recruitment agency's/consultant's industry knowledge and approach may be of benefit in attracting high-level applicants to areas of skill shortage;
- to expedite a recruitment process by having an agency/consultant manage parts of that process.

An agency/consultant might be involved in processes such as:

- preliminary screening of candidates where more than one position is advertised or a high number of applications are received;
- referee checking for external candidates;
- the design and administration of alternative selection methodologies.

Alternative selection methodologies might include:

- testing skills and abilities
- testing through task simulation
- aptitude testing
- psychological testing
- bio-data questionnaires
- provision of assessment centres.

The selection methods chosen will depend on the vacancy role and the required capabilities. Before determining a process, panels will need to consider a range of issues, including effectiveness, validity, cost and equity. All costs associated with the use of an external agency/consultant will be borne by the site/unit for which the vacancy is advertised.

Justification for using an external agency/consultant

The manager responsible for the vacancy should take a lead role in establishing and presenting a clear and valid reason for the use of an external agency/consultant to the appropriate delegate. It should be noted that procurement requirements may apply to the contracting of such agencies. Advice should be sought from Corporate HR. In selecting an appropriate external agency/consultant, managers must ensure:

- value for money;
- no conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, between the external agent and any employee.

Panel involvement by an external agency/consultant

The DECD Merit Selection Policy and Procedures provide that agencies/consultants must base all selection processes on a proper assessment of merit.

Chairperson

Throughout the selection process, it is the responsibility of the chairperson to guide the panel through the process in order to select the best possible applicant and to ensure the process is conducted in an equitable, fair and transparent

manner.

It is therefore mandatory that the chairperson of any selection panel be a trained DECD panellist, and that the principles and intentions of the Merit Selection Policy are upheld throughout the selection process.

Typically, external recruitment agency representatives are not trained in DECD' merit selection policy procedures, and therefore are not eligible to act as a chairperson in a selection processes. Further, there are sound public policy reasons why only an employee should act as a chairperson.

Panel members

It is acceptable to include an external recruitment agency representative in a selection panel to provide additional expertise. This is provided that other requirements of panel composition have been satisfied (Merit Instructions 3a and 3b).

As a panel member, an external recruitment agency/consultant can provide advice and assistance in gathering information about applicants. However, it is the responsibility of the panel as a whole to ensure that each applicant's suitability is assessed against the essential minimum requirements of the vacancy, and that an appropriate assessment of merit is conducted.

It remains the panel's responsibility to use all aspects of the selection process, including any external agency/consultant services, appropriately to obtain the information required from each applicant to ensure selection of the best person for the vacancy.

Shortlisting

External recruitment agencies/consultants should not be solely responsible for conducting shortlisting processes and referring the outcomes to the panel for further consideration. They may provide a highly recommended shortlist of applicants; however, all applications should be available to and assessed by the entire panel when determining the final shortlist and in formulating the recommendations.

Similarly in regard to referee statements, the panel should be responsible for the design, taking and assessment of referee statements.

Ethical Conduct Unit

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