

Guide for Interviewing Candidates from Underrepresented Groups

The following table provides some key factors for consideration in the recruitment of people from different underrepresented groups. The information is drawn from the best practice research on diversity and inclusion (D&I) which exists in Australia and internationally. It aims to assist organisations to enhance their D&I efforts by increasing the representation of people from underrepresented groups into the workforce.

Key factors to consider in the interview process

Considerations applicable to all groups/interviewees

- Ensure that the role is clearly explained in a position description document.
- If possible, offer alternate forms of applications – whether written, video pitch, etc. (This will benefit those applicants who may not have prepared a civilian CV before - e.g. veterans - or those from linguistically diverse backgrounds – e.g. refugees).
- Consider providing the interview questions in advance.
- Prepare the candidate in advance, by “walking” them through the interview process.
- Begin with some general welcoming conversation and be genuinely interested in the person to help them feel comfortable and relaxed. Try to build rapport and trust before you ask probing questions.
- Clearly explain the position and what you expect of the successful applicant, as well as the interview and appointment process.
- Where a selection panel is used to employ staff; it should reflect diversity in its membership.
- Inform applicants of the specific support services and tailored networks that the company offers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, women, neurodivergent, multicultural and veteran staff, among other underrepresented groups.

- Highlight the flexible work arrangements that are available (where applicable) e.g. remote working.
- Allow ample time for applicants to respond to questions (particularly those from linguistically diverse backgrounds such as refugees and multicultural applicants, as well as applicants with neurodiversity).
- The use of a relational questioning styles has been shown to make applicants from diverse backgrounds more comfortable (i.e. a conversation rather than the more formal question and answer structure).
- Once a decision has been made, the applicant should be presented with a sound basis for the outcome and must detail how the outcome was reached, based on merit—and in accordance with other relevant legislation and policies.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

- Consider whether the position could be filled by using affirmative measures such as making the position an identified position (These roles usually involve developing policies or programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, or direct interaction with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities)
- Be aware of the importance that **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** peoples place on community, country and cultural and traditional practices.
- Include an **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** representative on the selection panel whenever possible.
- Ensure panel members have undertaken cultural awareness and/or capability training.
- Consider whether the job needs to be full time. Can it be done using flexible arrangements that allow for candidates to still engage in family or cultural activities.
- Be prepared with information about any cultural leave entitlements or applicable flexible working arrangements.

Women

- Encourage women applicants to discuss why they are attracted to the resources sector.
- Understand the drivers which see women leaving the sector and try to ensure these points are addressed in the engagement process (e.g. discuss the support the company provides for career progression, networking, childcare, flexibility offerings, etc.)
- Outline how the company is creating an environment and workplace that supports satisfying career journeys for women.
- Female applicants need to feel that they are entering a safe space and one where appropriate support mechanisms are in place for female employees.
- Highlight the number of women already in the company – and how many are in leadership positions. If this is still a work in progress, highlight the strategies and efforts the company is making to recruit more women and foster opportunities for female leaders.

Neurodiverse

- Consider the physical interview environment itself. Ideal environments for interviewing neurodiverse candidates are quiet rooms that are free from clutter and distractions. This can apply to both face-to-face and virtual interviews.
- Interviews might be broken up if necessary to make it easier for some neurodiverse candidates to manage (if a lengthy interview, a break mid-way, etc.).
- Allow ample time for neurodiverse candidates to consider their responses.
- Where applicable, highlight the number of neurodiverse employees that the company currently employs. Alternatively, explain the strategies and commitment the company has to including those with neurodiversity.
- Be aware that some neurodiverse candidates can struggle to make eye contact, fidget, or exhibit physical tics. Be accepting of these idiosyncrasies.

- Interview questions will ideally be direct and focus on the candidate's actual experience and skills rather than open-ended and vague hypothetical questions.
- Consider providing the interview questions in advance to neurodiverse applicants (as this has been shown to alleviate a lot of the stress).

Multicultural

- Realise how different Australian culture and the interviewing process may be to where the applicant comes from.
- Be alert to body language and eye contact and recognise that multicultural communities give different meaning to communication, expression, and emotions (e.g. handshaking).
- Allow ample time for those from linguistically diverse backgrounds to respond to questions.
- Consider checking with the candidate if there is a need for any specific arrangements (e.g. physical access, interpreters, etc.) for the interview. The gesture will show inclusion even for those who do not require it.
- Use a relational questioning style as this can make the applicant more comfortable (a conversation rather than a question and answer structure).
- Research shows the importance of applicants from multicultural backgrounds feeling that the interviewer "gets them." Building rapport is particularly critical for this group.

Veterans

- Performance based interviews—focusing on evidenced achievements and experiences—have been shown to be the most successful form of interview with regards to veterans.
- Be mindful that this may be their first civilian job interview/application. Accept that their responses and examples of experience may be situational and different to the resources context.
- Avoid questions around current military status, discharge status.

- Build rapport and demonstrate an understanding of the transition they are making. Questions may include: What opportunities are you looking forward to taking advantage of as a civilian employee?
- Questions should focus on the unique qualities and skills of veteran applicants (e.g. leadership, problem solving, teamwork, working under pressure, etc.).

Realise that some veterans may not be comfortable boasting about their individual accomplishments, authority, or level of responsibility, as the military often prioritises a team environment.