

What to Consider When Recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Why is it important to consider these factors?

The recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should follow a culturally inclusive process that acknowledges cultural diversity and allows all candidates to best demonstrate their capabilities. A culturally inclusive process helps you to identify the best person for the role and build a more diverse workforce.

Some key considerations for companies to consider when advertising for, and interviewing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples include:

Advertising

Before advertising and recruiting, it's important to consider the tasks, skills, knowledge and experience required for the position.

To reach a wide range of potential applicants and attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates:

- Emphasise the responsibilities and required skills of the role instead of solely focusing on formal qualifications (which may not always be necessary)
- Consider whether job qualifications that are listed as mandatory can be substituted with relevant life or work experience and practical knowledge
- Use plain and inclusive language and avoid technical jargon in the job advertisement.

Consider if the position will be 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)

When preparing your job advertisement include:

- A clear description of the role
- Leave entitlements, including cultural leave

- Hours of work and potential for flexible working arrangements
- Reference to your Reconciliation Action Plan and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement strategy (if applicable)
- A statement encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to apply, such as:
 - 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are encouraged to apply for this role'
 - 'First Nations peoples are encouraged to apply for this job'
- Images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members working in your organisations (with their consent).

Your organisation may wish to provide a contact number for a person that applicants can contact with any questions about the application process. This helps build trust and confidence, and potentially mitigates barriers and challenges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants might usually face.

Where should you advertise?

Consider where and how your prospective candidates may find your advertisement. Are they seeing your vacancy notice on a job board, your business's social media pages, on an online job search website or in the newspaper?

Consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused platforms when advertising your roles in addition to your usual attraction strategies. These platforms include:

- Community social media pages
- Koori Mail
- Indigenous Employment Australia
- Word-of-mouth
- First Nations job fairs
- Torres News and Cape News (Weipa)
- First Nations Telegraph.

Ensure time frames for responses are long enough to allow potential candidates to hear about the position through word-of-mouth.

Interviewing

It is important that those involved in the interview process have undertaken cultural awareness and/or capability training. Understanding cultural nuances can help create a more inclusive interview process. This can be demonstrated in various ways:

General Interview Considerations:

- 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.
- Be clear on the type of answer you are looking for (e.g. a simple answer or detailed example of their experience). A brief response may not indicate the candidate does not know any more, but that they are shy or feel 'shame'. Ask for more detailed answers in a conversational manner.
- Clearly explain the position and what you expect of the successful applicant, as well as the interview and appointment process.
- Be mindful of differences in communication styles. Give candidates time to think through questions and their answers. Silence is not necessarily a sign that they do not understand.

Cultural considerations when interviewing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants:

- Having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the recruitment team and interview panel can be hugely beneficial to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.
- Interviewers may consider researching local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customs, traditions, values, and historical contexts. This can go a long way to demonstrating genuine interest and respect for the cultural background of applicants.
- Using respectful and inclusive language – and if unsure, ask the applicant the preferred terminology.

- Avoid generalisations.
- Ask thoughtful questions which demonstrate a respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. For example, inquire about the candidate's cultural background, experiences, and how their cultural identity influences their approach to work.
- Listen actively and show interest when they are discussing their culture, background, previous experiences.
- Demonstrate empathy and understanding towards any challenges or barriers the applicant may have faced due to their cultural background. Show willingness to accommodate their needs and preferences, if applicable and explain how the company accommodates for its Indigenous staff (where applicable, for example, through flexibility).