



Australian Government

Job Access

Driving disability employment

Alternative ways to assess candidates

Provide a barrier-free application and assessment process to get the best person for the job.



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of Australia and the lands upon which we live and work and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge the stories, traditions, and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Introduction

Traditionally, employers have used a panel-style job interviews to assess whether a candidate is suitable for a role.

Interviews are not always the best way to evaluate a candidate's ability to do the job, as they often focus on presentation skills or answering the questions quickly, which may not reflect the real job requirements. This can sometimes overlook candidates who have the necessary skills but struggle with presentation or communication.

Naturally, candidates who have good presentation skills get through the door even though the position might not require such skills.

Not all candidates can express clearly or present well, but they might possess the right skill set to perform the job. Consider neurodivergent candidates or people with learning difficulties who might experience language or social communication barriers.

In response, more inclusive employers are now exploring alternative assessment methods that allow a more diverse range of candidates to be considered, including those with disability or different communication style. This document explores various alternative assessment methods and offers tips on how to create a more inclusive recruitment process. It also discusses things that you should consider when using these assessment methods so that you attract not only people with disability but encourage a more diverse candidate pool to your organisation.

Employers should also consider being open with candidates during the application phase that you are open to consider using alternate ways of assessing their application and what that assessment will look like.

No matter how you choose to assess candidates, remember to offer workplace adjustments as they enable fair participation.

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Getting started

Position description

Position descriptions should clearly explain the purpose and key selection criteria, helping candidates decide if the if the position is right for them. They should focus on what needs to be done, not just how it should be done.

To hire candidates with disability, it is important to understand and have a basic knowledge of essential requirements and offer support or workplace adjustments when needed.

Inherent requirements must be determined in the circumstances of each job and may include:

- The ability to perform the functions that are a necessary part of the job
- Productivity and quality requirements
- The ability to work effectively in the team or other type of work organisation concerned
- The ability to work safely

Each position description should encourage candidates to ask for any support or adjustments that may be needed in the job.

Resources:

['Determining the inherent requirements of a job' Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

['Design and advertise your job' JobAccess toolkit](#)

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We've changed our position descriptions to encourage people to apply for our roles, particularly with disability, and what that encourages or mentions to them is that we can make any adjustments throughout the process. So, let's say you need a hearing loop or some assistance or anything that you might need throughout the process, it is to really encourage people to say, "Yes, I need some support," and what that support might look like.

**Stephanie Burzacott, Talent Acquisition Specialist
Central Highlands Water**

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Workplace adjustments

Organisations can sometimes overlook offering workplace adjustments at the application and interview phase.

Considerations for good practice

- Give an opportunity for applicants to request workplace adjustments during the application and interview process
- Provide an email address or contact number to allow candidates to discuss support or accessibility requirements and/or discuss alternative methods for lodging an application
- Ask candidates questions around the requirements of the job
- Give candidates the opportunity to ask for alternative ways to receive communication about their application
- Add free text boxes to your organisation's online application process to support candidates with disability. Some examples include:
 - Do you require any support or workplace adjustments to take part in an interview with us? If yes, please provide further details so we can help.
 - Are you linked to a Disability Employment Service provider? If yes, please provide contact details. We may contact your provider to support your application further.
 - Is there anything that we can do to help ensure your success with this application?

Resources:

[‘Getting your workplace ready’ JobAccess Employer Toolkit](#)

[‘Making Workplace Adjustments Easy, Effective and Equitable - Conversation Guide’ JobAccess](#)

JobAccess is here to help

Your hiring team should have a basic understanding of workplace adjustments and how to offer them. But you don't need to have everything ready from the start, and you don't have to do it alone. Anyone on your team can contact JobAccess on **1800 464 800** to get advice on how to provide adjustments at any part of the hiring process.

The JobAccess advice line and [Employment Assistance Fund \(EAF\)](#) can offer tailored advice and support. You or your employee may be eligible for financial help to buy work related modifications, equipment, Auslan services, workplace training and assistance, and support services for people with disability and mental health conditions.

The EAF is available to eligible people with disability who are starting a job, are self-employed or are already working. It can also help people with disability who need Auslan help or special work equipment to find and prepare for a job.

TIP: Include a link to the JobAccess website on your intranet as a resource for staff www.jobaccess.gov.au

Advertising your vacancy

Disability Employment Services Providers

In addition to using online job websites, also consider advertising opportunities to [Disability Employment Service \(DES\) providers](#).

DES providers work with each DES participant (candidate with disability) to meet their individual needs.

DES can help a candidate get ready for work with resumes, interview skills, career advice, training, work experience, and can make direct contact with employers about suitable jobs.

The primary function of a DES provider is to ensure that both the employee and employer receive all the help necessary to address and manage any disability-related issues and potential barriers that could get in the way of satisfactory work performance and hinder job retention in the longer term.

The DES provider may be able to help your new employee to settle into the job. They may also be able to offer support in preparing your team for the new employee or arrange disability awareness training through JobAccess, if needed.

External recruitment agencies

If your organisation uses external recruitment agencies, be clear with them that you are open to and encourage people with disability to apply. Recommend them how you manage workplace adjustment requests.

Ensure they are aware of your approach to disability employment and have them commit to helping you find the best people, regardless of disability.

Applications

Application form

An application form is generally the first point of contact when applying for a job and selecting candidates for further assessment.

A simple and relevant application form can allow all candidates to fully demonstrate themselves and can be easily completed using pre-fill options.

Considerations for good practice

- Is the application form accessible?
- Are there alternatives or support if a candidate has accessibility requirements?
- Do you encourage candidates to request any adjustments at this stage?

Resume

A resume is a formal document that a candidate creates to itemise their qualifications for a job. It allows a recruiter to quickly assess a candidate's qualifications and experiences.

Considerations for good practice

- Be reasonable when you see a resume gap. Consider the barriers the applicant may have had in relation to work experience opportunities due to perceived bias
- Review unpaid and indirect experiences (sport, hobbies, clubs, volunteer work)
- Consider neglecting dates such as graduation / last employment / birth dates and names when reviewing resumes

Cover letter

A resume is usually accompanied by a customised cover letter in which the candidate expresses an interest in a specific job or company and draws attention to the most relevant specifics on their resume and their motivational fitness for the role and organisation.

Cover letters are also a good way of getting to know more about your prospective candidate. When you request a cover letter in the job advertisement, recommend that candidates avoid repeating their resume but to talk about who they are, what are their interests, and any volunteering that they may have done.

Considerations for good practice

- Does the role require a written expression? In the same way that interviews preference presentation skills, cover letters preference writing skills. Does the job require this skill?
- If you specify an accompanying cover letter, to what word/page count will you limit the cover letter?
- Give clear instructions and encourage candidates to write about who they are, including their strengths and weaknesses
- Consider alternatives to written cover letters, such as an audio recording

Statement addressing key selection criteria

Addressing the key selection criteria allows candidates to answer questions in their own time to demonstrate, with real life examples, how they meet the requirements to succeed in the job. The selection criteria should ideally be based on the inherent requirements of the job.

Considerations for good practice

- Does the role require a written expression? In the same way that interviews preference presentation skills, statements addressing key selection criteria preference writing skills. Does the job require this skill?

- If you require a statement, the expressed criteria should be focused on what needs to be done rather than how it is done
- Suggest candidates can show their skills from other experiences outside of work
- Advise formats in which will you accept responses (for example, written, oral or video)
- Are you limiting the size of the answers?
- Limit how many selection criteria you are asking candidates to answer

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A lot of government requires responses to key selection criteria. That's something I have removed because really you don't need to respond to those in order to apply for a role. There are ways we can evaluate candidates throughout the process.

**Stephanie Burzacott, Talent Acquisition Specialist
Central Highlands Water**

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Pre-screen

A pre-screen is typically a brief phone call to quickly assess and confirm a candidate's qualifications and enthusiasm for a job.

When you have decided to progress a candidate to the next stage, this is when you need to ensure that you provide an environment where the candidate can be their best.

Considerations for good practice

- How much notice will you give the candidate before calling?
- Agree on what you are looking for beforehand (for example, motivation, skills, availability)
- Will you provide screening questions ahead of time?
- Is there more than one assessor involved in this process? Are they all measuring candidates in the same manner if contacting separately?
- Ask each candidate if they would need any adjustments to ensure the best outcome
- Understand what adjustments the person may need. For example, think about neurodivergent candidates or candidates with learning difficulties for language and communication to ensure a smooth and fair process
- How are these adjustments arranged and communicated to the interviewers?

Assessment

Traditional assessment methods

Good recruiters know that candidates often leave out details on their resume. Finding the right person for the job is about identifying the candidate's skills that fit the role and accomplishments that demonstrate how they use those skills.

Bias can make it harder for candidates with disability to gain work experience. Looking at other experiences, such as volunteer work or hobbies or other activities, can show useful skills. This helps remove barriers and lets you find the right candidate, even if they haven't had the direct work experience

I started in an allied health assistant role and the opportunity opened up here. Unfortunately, a lot of the time people with disability have to prove we can do the role before you give the opportunity to be able to do the role. So, having the first start opened up a lot of doors.

**Erin Mills, Speech Pathologist
Landing Spot**

Interview

An interview is mainly a way to evaluate how a person can speak in front of a group. It is a good way to connect with candidates. However, this may not always be related to the actual skills need for the job.

Considerations for good practice

- Adjust your expectations. Is a firm handshake and good eye contact important for every job? Do your best to evaluate a candidate's behaviour based on the needs of the position that is being filled
- Will the interviews be done in person or remotely (over the phone or virtually)?
- Use behavioural questions that focus on the candidate's ability to meet the inherent requirements
- Where is the interview being held? Is the location accessible? Using a space that gives every applicant equal advantage. Interview rooms should be quiet, comfortable, have proper lighting and be fully accessible for everyone
- Who is conducting the interview and how many people are involved? Inform the receptionist and any co-interviewers on any specific candidate requirements, and be mindful of privacy
- Are all panel members assessing the candidates in the same manner?
- Offer interview questions ahead of time
- Use inclusive language throughout the process, including the interview.
- Don't presume how a candidate will perform a task. If you are unsure, ask them. For example, 'this job involves research and report writing. Can you tell us how you would go about that?'

- Give applicants time to think about a question and jot down their thoughts
- Allow support workers or assistance animals to attend interviews if needed
- Consider offering applicants on a tour of your workplace. This is a good way to put a candidate at ease, promote a more relaxed conversation
- Think about offering a guaranteed interview approach for candidates with disability. This can increase your organisation's exposure, experience and confidence in interviewing more candidates with disability

Resources:

['Inclusive language tips for employers' JobAccess Employer Toolkit](#)

['Recruiting people with disability - Interview and selection section process' JobAccess Employer Toolkit](#)

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For people with neurodivergence, coming to a meeting without an agenda can be anxiety inducing. So, giving points beforehand is beneficial.

**Erin Mills, Speech Pathologist
Landing Spot**

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Online assessment

Online assessments are often used for bulk recruitment jobs where a lot of candidates are expected to apply. It is important to make sure these assessments are relevant to the job in question.

They help organisations save money while testing a large number of candidates to see if they are a good fit for the role.

Considerations for good practice:

- Ensure what you are trying to measure meets both organisational and job requirements
- Check if the online assessment platforms are accessible.
- Are your hiring managers assessing candidates correctly? Most online assessment systems will give candidates a score and then explain how that score is achieved. Quite often, hiring managers look at score (for example, 73 out of 100) and make an assessment on the score alone. In some cases, hiring managers pick candidates with the highest scores without looking at how that score is achieved and if that rationale for the score is relevant to the role.

Assessment centres

Assessment centre tests a candidate's abilities and skills in a group setting, helping assessors predict how they will perform in the workplace. Centres can also be beneficial when assessing bulk candidates in a group setting.

Considerations for good practice

- Is the centre and facilitator aware of your disability employment goals?
- Are access requirements provided for in a dignified manner?
- How many stages will the assessment have? Is this communicated to all candidates?
- Do all assessors measure candidates' performance in the same manner?
- Are the tasks assigned relevant to the tasks within the job?
- Look for the positives in candidates rather than finding reasons to not hire them

Additional assessment methods

Skills assessment

A skills assessment is a test that checks a candidate's knowledge or abilities in certain area of learning. It can be a task design to show how well the candidate can perform in a real situation.

Skills assessments help reduce bias from interviewer and let candidates show what they can actually do in a more relaxed and realistic setting.

Considerations for good practice

- Break a relevant sample task into parts of the job. This can show the skills a candidate already has and where there may be areas for more training or support
- Does the assessment replicate the job in question?
- How much time will you expect from the candidate?
- Can the task be completed outside of work (remotely)?

Work scenario

A work scenario is a type of job interview where the candidate shows how they would handle a situation they might face in the job they are applying for. This also gives candidates a chance to experience what the role could like.

Considerations for good practice

- Choose a scenario that is realistic for the role. Can the conditions in the role be truly replicated?
- How many people are needed for the scenario? Consider limiting the number of people involved
- How much time will you allow the candidate for preparation? Can you provide potential prompt sheets to support their responses?
- How will the candidate be assessed? Is the assessment criteria observable and measurable?
- Will there be more than one assessor and will every assessor score in the same way?

- Offer workplace adjustments, such as providing copies of scenarios in advance (if applicable), provide materials in alternative format (electronic, large print), and allowing extra time.

Work trial

Structured work trials over a short, fixed- period where a candidate works for a day or part of a day. It helps the employer see the candidate's skills and abilities beyond what written on their resume. .

This trial gives the candidate a chance to show how they perform the job over time, and it can also reduce any stress or uncertainty they may feel. It helps candidate figure out if the job is a good fit for them.

During this time, the employer can also identify any adjustments, training or support the candidate might need before officially starting the job.

Considerations for good practice

- Clearly define work expectations – tasks, breaks, start and end times
- Are access requirements provided for in a dignified manner?
- Are all parties involved briefed on any specific candidate requirements, being mindful of privacy?
- Does the trial replicate right elements of the job in question?

Internships

An internship is a work experience opportunity offered by an organisation for a set period. It is usually for students or graduates who wants to gain skills and experience in a specific field.

Employers benefit from internships because they can hire best interns, who have already shown skills and capabilities, which saves time on hiring later.

Internships help reduce bias during hiring process and give a clear picture of candidate's skills and how they understand of the job and the workplace. It also helps both the candidate and organisation to see if any adjustments are needed.

Considerations for good practice

- Clearly define work expectations – shifts, times, tasks, breaks, start and end dates
- Is there a budget which allows for the candidate to be paid accordingly?
- Are there privacy concerns with the candidate's information? Is there a need to add the candidate in to the organisation's system so that they can perform in the role, even if only for a short time?
- Are access requirements provided for in a dignified manner?
- Are all parties involved briefed on any specific candidate requirements, being mindful of privacy?

Reference check

Checking references involves contacting previous employers, supervisors and schools to verify key employment and educational information and learn more about a candidate's experience and skills.

Reference checks allow to verify past performance that shows the candidate's motivation and confirms the information in their application.

Considerations for good practice

- Be reasonable when you see a resume gap. Consider the barriers the applicant may have had in relation to work experience opportunities due to perceived bias
- Consider also using personal or extra-curricular references
- What information are you looking to receive from referees (such as a candidate's behaviour or skills)?
- Examine if the questions are relevant to the inherent requirements of the job.
- Has the candidate provided permission for you to contact each referee?

More options

Job analysis

Job analysis can determine whether a specific job is suitable for a particular candidate and where a workplace adjustment may be needed.

A job analysis helps:

- Break a job position into tasks
- Identify the inherent requirements
- Demonstrate what the candidate can do
- Identify aspects of the job where support or adjustments may be needed
- Facilitate solutions for any part of the job that a candidate is unable to perform

Job customisation

Job customisation is a consideration you can make if you find the 'right person for the job' that can meet most of the inherent requirements of a job. It is also known as job carving or job re-design.

Job customisation can include reallocating tasks to other team members if the candidate or employee is unable to perform them. Or splitting a full-time job into two part-time jobs and distributing tasks to each employee based on their strengths, skills and capabilities.