Applicant Tip Sheet

**Please note:**

The following information is a general guide that suggests best practices for applicants applying for positions within the Federal Public Service. Certain departments may have other screening practices or systems.

# Read the fine print

Please read the complete job advertisement because it will contain important information in regards to the application process such as: the area of selection, the intention of the process, the type of positions that will be offered, the next steps, the closing date and other information/notes.

# Tips during the application period

* Make sure you apply with intention. The application process may take time, therefore we recommend that you look for job opportunities that are of interest to you and take the time to apply.
* Take time to review the essential qualifications. If you do not meet all the essential qualifications or if you are missing some, you may want to move on to the next poster.
* Prepare your best examples and use the STAR method when applying for jobs. Ask someone to give you feedback on your example and ask if your example needs further clarifications.
* Google is your friend; look up competencies to understand them and understand the behaviours that are expected on the job.
* The poster will contain contact information. If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact the hiring department.
* Self-declare! Some departments’ need the perspective of persons’ with disabilities therefore do not hesitate to self-declare.
* If needed, request accommodations. Please speak up and provide information regarding the accommodations you require.

# Understand the required essential qualifications

Carefully read all the essential qualifications (education and experience) as well as any definitions to self-assess:

You should submit an application if you possess the required education and experience.

You should not submit an application if you do not possess the required education and experience. If you lack experience, we encourage you to discuss with your current employer and set objectives on your learning plan to gain the desired qualifications.

If you are in doubt, do not hesitate to ask someone you trust for a second opinion.

# Use the STAR method

The STAR Method is a way of answering questions that provides assessment board members with clear, concrete and concise answers. Questions that are answered in the STAR method format get to the heart of what a candidate actually did in a previous work experience.

**STAR stands for**

* **Situation**: What was the situation you / your previous employer faced?
* **Task**: What tasks were involved in that situation?
* **Action**: What actions did you take?
* **Results**: What were the results of those actions?

# Keep it simple:

The Selection Board Members who will review your application might not be familiar with your area of work and may not know all the steps associated with your work related tasks, therefore, we recommend that you explain the various steps of your work activities should it be pertinent to do so.

Avoid using technical or specialized terms. As mentioned, the Selection Board Members who will screen your application might not be familiar with your area of work. As a result, they might not possess the breadth and depth of knowledgeable associated with the field of expertise you are applying for and may disregard nuances associated with specific terminology.

Avoid using long winded sentences as they may confuse the reader.

# Buzz words

**A**void using “BUZZ Words” that do not relate to criteria:

Against popular belief, the Public Service Resourcing System (jobs.gc.ca) does not have job application scanning software that detects buzzwords. We encourage applicants to use adequate wording that will provide the appropriate and concise response to the qualifications being sought.

# Acronyms

Avoid using acronyms if the abbreviation has not already been explained.

# Pay attention to action words

When reading the experience criteria for staffing processes, please pay close attention to action words contained within and ensure the examples you chose to include speak to all of them. Similar attention should be given to punctuation and connector words such as "commas", "and" and "or" as these have a different function when used to describe an experience criteria. As such, action words or activities separated with a "," and connected with an "and" must all be demonstrated with concrete examples as in this case, they are all deemed essential by the hiring manager.

**For example:** Experience in conducting research, analysis **and** providing recommendations on Human Resources issues.

Conversely, when action words or activities are separated with a "," and connected with an "or", candidates may provide concrete examples for only one of the activities listed in the criterion as in this case, the hiring manager is looking for someone who has experience in at least one of the activities but not necessarily all of them.

**For example:** Experience in the application of policies**,** regulations **or** standards related to HR management in the federal public service.

# Complete the Asset criteria:

Certain qualifications may be considered to be assets which could be required at a later date. It is in the applicants’ best interest to demonstrate that they have as many of the asset qualifications as possible because these could be used to determine the “best fit” from among the qualified candidates. Asset qualifications could also be used as a volume management strategy in the screening process if there are large numbers of applicants. Asset qualifications could also be invoked at any other stage of the selection process to reduce the amount of candidates if deemed appropriate.

# Does your response answer the question?

Ensure that your examples answer the actual question and demonstrate your experience associated with the merit criterion and the associated definition (if applicable).

It is also recommended to use the five “W’s” (who, what, where, when and why). This approach will allow you to develop a well-rounded example that clearly demonstrates your qualifications. For example, who did you engage, what did you do, when did this take place etc.

## Example

Significant\* experience in the application and interpretation of financial policies or accounting standards.

* Significant means direct responsibility during at least two (2) years within the last five (5) years.
  + **Good answer:** I possess experience in the application and interpretation of financial policies and accounting standards, which I acquired while working for “X” from March 2019 to July 2021. As part of my daily responsibilities, I… (proceed with specific example)
  + **Wrong answer:** I have experience in the application and interpretation of financial policies and accounting standards acquired while working for “X” (providing the example without mentioning your direct duties and responsibilities).

# Proofread and review your application

Doing so may help to avoid any confusion when the Selection Board Members read and screen your application.

**Please note:** In some selection processes, your application may be used as a writing sample to assess your ability to communicate effectively in writing, if this evaluation methodology is used it will be stated on the job opportunity advertisement.

It can also be beneficial to ask someone to review your application. An outside perspective may help structure your response in a clear and concise manner.

# Assumptions

Selection board members **cannot** make assumptions. As such the onus is on the applicant to provide detailed and concise examples of their qualifications. It is not sufficient to only state that the qualifications are met or to provide a listing of current or past responsibilities.

Applicants must always provide specific details of tasks, projects and/or accomplishments and timelines to clearly articulate how they meet the breadth, depth and scope of the experience being sought. Applicants should always set the appropriate amount of time aside to clearly read the job opportunity advertisement and find pertinent examples that will best highlight their work experiences.

# E-mail Addresses

In the context of most selection processes, the intention is to communicate regularly with candidates by e-mail. Candidates who apply to selection processes should always provide a valid e-mail address and make sure the address is functional and accessible at all times and accepts messages from unknown users. It is your responsibility as a candidate to update your e-mail address if any changes occur.