Appendix 2 – Executive work value assessment methodology and guidelines

These materials support the process to define the work value of an executive position at a particular level, providing a consistent and transparent framework for classifying public service executives.

Work value assessment methodology

The work value of a position is assessed through a process of position analysis. Position analysis is an evidence-based methodology that gathers information about a position in a structured and systematic way.

The information is compared to the standards that have been agreed for each of the executive classification levels in the Work Level Standards (WLS) through the use of the work value assessment tool.

The work value assessment tool uses the descriptors from the work value standards. The different sets of descriptors are assigned a score.

The assessor examines the information gathered through the assessment process, compares it with the descriptors in the tool, and allocates a score for each factor.

The combined score will sit within a range indicating the appropriate executive classification. Positions may sit anywhere within the range. This reflects the diversity of positions within each classification level, with more diversity expected at the lower levels, reflected by a wider score range for these positions.

Classification	Scores
Senior Executive Service Band 1	21 to 35
Senior Executive Service Band 2	36 to 47
Senior Executive Service Band 3	48 to 56

Principles of evaluation

There are a number of important principles that should be followed when conducting a work value assessment and when using the work value assessment tool.

1. **Evaluate the position, not the person.** When assessing the classification level of a position, it is important to focus only on the position itself and not on the performance, strengths, and/or specific expertise that the incumbent may bring to a position. If the incumbent leaves the position, the responsibilities and complexities of the position remain the same. If these change, the position should be re-evaluated based on the new expectations.
2. **Work value (and therefore classification level) does not equal remuneration.** Do not use classification level to address a remuneration issue such as the need to offer higher salaries to attract critical skills. Where there is a market shortage, it is better to negotiate remuneration separately, not increase the classification level of the

position.

3. **Ignore the existing classification of current executive positions.** It is important to ignore the current classification of the position and focus on assessing the work value of the position as it is presented in the information gathered.
4. **Determine the classification according to the highest function(s) undertaken by the position.** Most positions will comprise work (duties and responsibilities) with a range of work value. It is important that the position is assessed according to the highest function(s) undertaken, taking into account the percentage of the position that these functions comprise. For a position to be classified at a particular level, 70-80 per cent of the work undertaken by the position must equal the work value of that level.
5. **Take into account both importance and frequency of tasks undertaken.** Related to the principle above, this principle states that the assessment of a position's work value should be a balance between the importance of the tasks and the frequency of their occurrence. An assessment should not overly focus on tasks that are done infrequently, even if they are considered important.
6. **Avoid duplication.** When allocating scores for each of the factors, avoid using the same information about a position to give 'credit' over more than one factor. It is important to separately assess the different factors and evaluate each aspect of the position on its own merits.
7. **Workload does not equal work value.** Workload (the 'busyness' of a position) is not related to work value and should not be used as a basis on which to classify a position. Where there are workload issues for a position, these are best dealt with via a structural adjustment in the overall working environment and a consideration of the FTE required to complete the work
8. **Fully understand the position.** The most important principle of evaluation is that of understanding the position to be evaluated. It is not possible to conduct an accurate and reliable analysis and evaluation of a position when the position is not fully understood. It is imperative that the information gathered about the position gives a full and detailed view of the current activities, duties, accountabilities, complexities and relationships that the position is responsible for now and for the foreseeable future. Information should be gathered from a range of accurate and detailed sources, with a critical source of information being the interview(s).

Step by step evaluation

Position evaluation is a multi-step process, however there are two main phases. First, the assessor collects the relevant information. Secondly, the assessor analyses the position against the factors using the work value assessment tool and compares the position with the expected standards in the WLS. Once the assessment is complete, then the assessor can make a recommendation about the appropriate classification level of the position.

Phase One: Information gathering

Step One – Documentation

A skilled assessor will collect the relevant information on the position. There are usually a number of corporate documents that are relevant to understanding the position. These include the following:

- organisational chart (either existing or proposed)
- position description (current or proposed)
- business plans for the business unit/division/area of responsibility
- performance agreement (for existing positions)
- list of delegations held by the position
- list of committees or working groups with which the position is involved (as either member or chair)
- budget or cabinet papers/new policy proposal documentation
- government or ministerial statements
- press Releases or other media material
- annual report

Step Two – Interview

During the information-gathering stage it is important to source as much information as possible, from as many relevant sources as possible, in order to fully understand the position. One of the most important sources of information is an interview with a person who knows detailed and accurate information about the position. This is usually the incumbent and/or the supervisor, however it could be any person who knows the position well such as a former incumbent or manager-once-removed. Where a position is new, any person such as the proposed supervisor of the position can be interviewed. It may also be useful to interview stakeholders and/or clients or colleagues of the position. An Interview Protocol document is included that will help guide the interview process.

During the interview, remember to:

1. Use the Interview Protocol document, starting with the initial questions and moving through to the key responsibilities. At this point, use the interviewee's responses to guide the use of the other questions. As the interviewee talks about their key

responsibilities, they will often cover off on other information such as their accountability, decision-making, authority etc. It's not necessary to ask each question separately, or in the order presented in the protocol, if these areas have already been covered. However, it is essential that enough information is gathered to assess the position accurately.

2. Ask as many clarifying questions as possible to ensure that you fully understand the position and all its responsibilities. Even if the position is one that seems familiar, ensure that no information is missed as there may be aspects of the position that are different to other positions of the same 'type'. Do not be concerned that the interviewee may expect you to understand the position. If there is any aspect of the position or 'jargon' used that you do not fully understand, ask questions to clarify your understanding.
3. Ensure that the interviewee has given enough information to cover off on all of the work value factors in the work value assessment tool. This includes staffing numbers, budgets, a list of key stakeholders, as well as information about the complexity and accountability of the position and its upward reporting lines.
4. Take notes during the interview. Do not rely on memory to assess the position. The position must be assessed according to the evidence gathered during the interview and through the examination of the documentation. Notes are the only source of evidence for the interview so ensure they are detailed.
5. Concentrate on the tasks and responsibilities of the position NOT the capabilities required. Technical knowledge and experience needed to competently perform the position should be covered, however 'soft' skills are focused on the person, not the position. Use the 'Knowledge' factor definition to understand the information needed for the assessment of technical knowledge and experience.

Phase Two: Assessing the position

Step One – Use the work value assessment tool

In phase two the assessor analyses the position in relation to the work level standards, using the work value assessment scoring template. The process is explained in detail below.

1. Assess each factor separately, comparing the information gathered with the descriptors for each score. Use the work value factor definitions to better understand what dimensions of the position are being assessed by each factor. Choose the set of descriptors that most closely match the information about the position.
2. Score each factor by allocating the score (1, 3, 5, 7) indicated by the set of descriptors. 'Half' scores may be allocated (e.g., 2, 4, 6) where the position appears to fit some of

the higher-level score, but not all.

3. Add up the scores to arrive at the total score for the position.
4. Use the scoring sheet template to find the recommended classification level for the position (band 1, band 2 or band 3).
5. If the total score is below the cut-off point for EXECUTIVE band 3, the position is said to be ‘below band 3’ but should not immediately be assumed to be VPS 6 or STS 7. The position needs to be compared against the VPS6 and STS7 grade descriptors in the Victorian Public Service Enterprise Agreement.

Step Two – Final comparison with work streams

Compare the WLS evaluation with the information in the work streams, which provides typical tasks and responsibilities for each of the executive bands. This step helps to confirm that the assessment against the factors has been accurate.

Step Three – Consider any special circumstances

At times there may be factors other than those in the work value assessment tool that warrant a classification level for a position that is not apparent through the assessment process. This situation is expected to be rare, and usually applies to positions that are created for special purposes in the context of very high risk and political sensitivity. Positions such as these are often time limited.

Step Four – Report

At the end of the process, a recommendation regarding the appropriate classification level for the position can be made. Use the work value assessment scoring sheet template to outline the scores chosen for each factor and the rationale for each choice.

Post-evaluation

After the evaluation process has been completed, there are three possible outcomes.

1. The position is at the expected classification
2. The position is lower than the current classification i.e over classified
3. The position is higher than the current classification i.e under classified

If the position is found to be at the expected classification level, no further action is needed.

Other outcomes that are possible include 'under-classification' or 'over-classification', where the score for the position fits within the range either above or below the current classification of the position. Where this occurs, it is necessary for the organisation to make decisions about how this can be corrected. Some options are:

- remove or add certain tasks and responsibilities or accountabilities to match the work value to the assessed classification
- restructure the work area to create a better fit of the position to its current classification
- reclassify the position to fit the recommended classification (and transfer the incumbent if necessary)
- take no action until the current incumbent leaves the position and then redesign the position to ensure a better fit with the intended classification.

Organisations are best placed to make a decision about options for change within the context of current and future planning, strategic direction and organisational goals. There may be other factors that influence these decisions or a decision to take no action for the foreseeable future.

Dispelling evaluation myths

There are a number of areas of misunderstanding that occur in the evaluation process. These include:

1. **A position cannot be evaluated if there is no incumbent.** This applies to both new positions and positions where the position is vacant. It is still possible to evaluate the position using other sources of information such as interviewing the (potential) manager, colleagues, the past incumbent or clients/stakeholders, and examining documentation such as position descriptions, business plans, and other corporate materials.
2. **You should only talk to the manager.** Although the manager is a good source of information about a position, it is always important to talk to an incumbent where possible as it is the incumbent that should best understand the details of the position.
3. **You should only talk to the incumbent.** The incumbent is usually one of the best sources of information about a position, however there are times when the incumbent may not be performing at the level expected of the position or may be bringing individual strengths to a position that would not be expected if the position was re-advertised and filled by a new person. It is always best to interview both the incumbent and the manager and, where relevant, colleagues or stakeholders to get a full understanding of the position.
4. **The process is completely objective.** Although the work value assessment tool uses a

scoring mechanism to arrive at a recommended classification level, the judgements made by the assessor are necessarily somewhat subjective, as they involve interpretation of the descriptors and the full WLS. The work value assessment tool and the WLS help to make the process more objective than pure guess work alone.

5. **The higher the score in the range, the better.** There are some managers and incumbents that believe that a 'higher' score in a range is a better one. It is expected that, across an organisation, positions will score variably within their classification levels and this is reflected in the rationale for the scoring ranges with lower level positions having more room for diversity (and therefore a larger 'range' of scores) than higher level positions. Positions would also be expected to score variably across factors, with, for example, more specialist positions scoring higher in the knowledge factor and independence factor, and policy positions scoring higher in the judgement and risk factor and impact factor. This further reflects the diversity of positions that can be expected within an organisation.