



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**



Developing neurodivergent- inclusive role adverts and position descriptions

Learn 4 steps to make your adverts and position descriptions more inclusive for neurodivergent people.

Step 1: be clear about the role and workplace

Role adverts and position descriptions can be an early barrier to employment for neurodivergent people. This is because there is often not enough information to understand what the job is and involves.

All candidates will benefit if you provide clear information about the role and workplace. This is even more useful for neurodivergent candidates, as you'll help remove many barriers.

Here are some things to be clear about:

What the role will involve day to day

Be clear about what the role is and what it would involve day to day. This will benefit all applicants, as they'll understand more about the role. For example:

- the working days and hours and if these vary between days or weeks
- if there is any flexibility in working days and hours (for example, if employees who work a set roster can swap shifts with other employees or if start and end times are flexible)
- the working location and if this is stable or changes (for example, if the role requires working at various locations day to day or involves regular travel and if travel is local, interstate and/or international)
- any physical requirements or activities (for example, lifting objects or walking up stairs)
- the types of software used in the role (for example, the Microsoft suite or any industry-specific software)
- how communication will take place in the role (for example, "communication in this role will take place across a range of formats such as email, phone and video").

The physical working environment

Describe the environment the role will take place in.

You don't need to write every detail, but enough so that applicants have a good sense of the workplace. This should include where the employee will work each day and the facilities you have.

It can be helpful to include images or a video of the working environments. This helps give applicants a sense of the working environment and if it will be suitable for them.

Here are some examples of what to highlight about your organisation:

Indoor-based role example

If the role is office-based, you may want to explain if it's open plan or if employees have access to a private office.

It can be helpful to include details about the environment so applicants have a sense of where they may spend their time.

In an advert or position description, you could explain it like this:

- “The successful applicant will work in an open-plan office located on the ground floor of a modern building. There are adjustable standing desks, large meeting rooms and cubicles for quiet work. The room has large windows with adjustable blinds. The noise on a regular day is usually low.”
- “The successful applicant will share a workspace with a small group of other staff members. All offices for the [name of department] are on the second floor. There is a shared kitchen close by.”

If the role is indoors and client-facing with limited or no office time, describe:

- the environments the employee will spend most of their time
- any facilities, such as a staff room.

Outdoors-based role example

If the role is based outdoors, you may want to explain where employees would go each day or what type of vehicle they’d drive.

In an advert or position description, you could explain it like this:

- “Each day you’ll begin your shift at the depot. The main building includes a kitchen and toilet facilities for staff use. From there, you’ll drive your assigned work vehicle to the work site for that day.”

If you want to attract neurodivergent applicants

Many people have had bad experiences when they tell others they’re neurodivergent. Because of this, they won’t know if it’s safe to share this with employers in the application process.

This can mean that neurodivergent applicants may feel they need to hide parts of themselves, which can be exhausting.

Make it clear in your job advert that you welcome neurodivergent people to apply. You can write something like:

- “We encourage neurodivergent applicants to apply”.

If you already have a statement about other diverse groups, write that this includes neurodivergent people.

This statement is a small way to show applicants they can be open about being neurodivergent, if they want to.

You can also consider using a [special measure](#) to target your role to only people with disability, encouraging neurodivergent applicants to apply.

Professional development and on-the-job training

Make it clear if there are requirements for further training on the job, like getting a type of vehicle licence or completing specific training.

Also write about what kinds of professional development you offer. This can help neurodivergent applicants know if they'll feel supported to progress in the workplace.

Also be clear if someone in the role would have career progression opportunities.

Here's an example:

- "We offer each employee the chance to participate in group learning seminars and workshops. There is peer mentoring available where you can opt to shadow other people to learn more about their job. We're also open to new ideas on how you want to commit to learning and development."

Step 2: consider what you need in the role

Neurodivergent people may be less likely to apply for a role if they don't feel they meet all criteria exactly.

Which is why it's important to make the requirements clear for applicants.

Here are some things you can do to make your position descriptions clearer:

List what is essential vs desirable

Neurodivergent people will often interpret information literally. Someone well suited to the role may not apply if they don't feel they meet all the listed criteria at the level described.

For all skills, experience and qualifications, ensure you make clear:

- the essential — what a person must have to be considered for the role, such as a

type of registration, licence or degree

- the desirable — what you'd like someone to have, but you'll consider a person for the role if they don't.

Use clear and objective benchmarks

Be as clear as you can when you write what level of attributes, skills and experience an applicant needs.

Where possible, use an objective benchmark that would help someone determine if they should apply. Without this, neurodivergent people may be unsure if they're eligible.

For example:

- If experience is required, think about how much experience and what kind they need.
- If specific knowledge is required, think about how you can communicate the level of knowledge they need.
- If certain skills are required, think about what level would be sufficient for the role and how you can communicate this.
- If a specific motivation or attitude is important, explain why it is needed and consider how applicants would assess if they have this.

Avoid only using single adjectives like 'effective', 'excellent' or 'good' to describe the level of skills you seek. Instead make it clear what you mean by these.

This is so candidates have enough information about what skill level you're seeking. Single adjectives don't provide enough information about the level required for the role.

Here are some examples:

- Don't write 'has excellent stakeholder management skills' and instead write 'has excellent project management skills, for example, has led a large project that involved multiple stakeholders.'
- Don't write 'has effective policy nous in the government context' and instead write 'has a strong understanding of policy, for example has supported the development and implementation of a policy on a government issue.'

Alternatively, think about if you'll accept other types of evidence.

Many neurodivergent people face barriers to gaining and maintaining employment. This means suitable candidates may not have the past work experience or degree you seek.

If applicable, consider if the applicant can demonstrate their experience or knowledge in other ways, such as personal projects.

Be specific about communication skills

If the applicant needs communication skills, provide context about the types and how they relate to the role.

For example, instead of “must have excellent communication skills” try and write something specific like:

- “This role will require meeting with people internal and external to the organisation. The successful applicant would need to initiate communication with new people and build rapport with them. This will include on or offsite face-to-face meetings, video conferencing, email and phone.”
- “This role requires the ability to communicate complex information in a way that makes sense to non-experts.”

Only ask for information once

Don't ask for the same information more than once. If you need to, explain why.

This will help the applicant understand the process. It will also prevent an applicant from thinking they've misunderstood the instructions.

Responding to key selection criteria

When choosing the key selection criteria, make sure each one is distinct and clear. Use the [VPS Capability Framework](#) to help develop these.

It's good practice to keep the application process as brief as possible.

As part of the application process, many public sector organisations only ask for applicants to submit:

- a cover letter of no more than 2 pages that responds to the key selection criteria
- a resume.

This process may be challenging for some neurodivergent applicants.

Think of other ways an applicant could demonstrate how they meet the key selection

criteria. For example, referencing personal projects or relevant experiences.

Have an option to give you information verbally

Some neurodivergent people will find it easier to tell you about their skills verbally.

Consider giving candidates the option to speak with you rather than submitting a written application.

This could be via phone, video meeting or a recorded video.

Step 3: use formatting accessible for neurodivergent people

Small changes to your documents can improve how accessible the information is to neurodivergent people.

Clear communication is key.

To improve the clarity of your role adverts and position descriptions, you should:

- use consistent font size, colour and headings — your organisation may have templates with styles built in that you can use
- space out information so there is white space between text
- chunk content under headings and use dot points to make your text easier to read
- use clear and plain wording and avoid idioms and colloquial language, taking care to think of how someone may literally interpret what you've written
- don't assume someone's knowledge (for example, explain uncommon terms and don't use industry jargon where possible)
- spell out acronyms in full first, including government acronyms
- remove repeated information and edit to only what is necessary
- [run the accessibility checker](#) on your document.

Step 4: explain how the application process will

work

Make sure you tell people:

- what you expect candidates to include in their application and the level of detail needed
- what the steps in the application process are
- what the key dates in the application process are
- where stages of the application process will take place (for example, if an interview will be online or in person)
- how long it will take you to communicate outcomes to applicants
- who can be contacted if candidates have questions about the role or application process, including how this person can be contacted and if there is a preferred time to contact them
- what types of questions you'll ask in an interview
- when you'll send the interview questions you'll ask (this should be at least 24 hours in advance)
- how they can request adjustments to the process.

Also ensure applicants get a confirmation email or text so they know their application has been received.

Adjustments to the application process

You must make [adjustments to your process](#) if a candidate requests it unless it would cause unjustifiable hardship to your organisation. It may be discrimination if you don't.

Include a statement about how candidates can access adjustments in your job advert and position description.

You don't need to specifically mention neurodivergent applicants in the statement.

But you can use the statement to provide clear information on what kinds of adjustments you can make for neurodivergent people. This can make it more likely a neurodivergent person will feel comfortable applying.

For example, you could write:

"If you're a neurodivergent applicant, we can make adjustments to the application process. Send your request and any questions to [email address]."

More resources

- For advice on adjustments, read [workplace adjustments advice for public sector organisations](#)
- If you want to make your role exclusive or prioritised for people with disability, think if you want to use a [special measure](#).