

Limited Search Recruitment: Applicant Initiated Approach Guidance

When sourcing applicants for permanent, fixed term and temporary backfill vacancies, agencies may use limited search recruitment methods only when vacancies or applicants meet one of the exceptional circumstances set out in Commissioner's Instruction 48, 49 or 50 (see Resources below).

Limited search recruitment may only be used where it is clearly justified and one of the circumstances applies. It should not replace advertising as the default recruitment method.

Limited search recruitment methods are:

- [applicant initiated approach](#)
- [referral](#)
- [use of a recruitment consultant](#)
- [targeted advertising](#).

If no circumstance applies, agencies advertise vacancies as soon as practicable.

Before starting a limited search recruitment hiring managers:

- justify and record that at least one of the exceptional circumstances applies under the relevant Commissioner's Instruction
- determine the limited search recruitment method or methods to be used.

This guidance covers **applicant initiated approach**.

Agencies need to consider when the applicant initiated approach may be a useful and justifiable recruitment approach. Human resources teams provide guidance to hiring managers on when this method may be used in their agency.

When this method is useful

An applicant initiated approach enables agencies to consider applicants who have already expressed interest in employment opportunities with them and given consent to be considered for vacancies.

Examples of how agencies can source applicants through an applicant initiated approach include:

- by establishing a register, system or other process to capture details of people interested in employment at the agencies and making this available to hiring managers
- using a talent marketplace for the public sector which, once available, enables people to express their interest in employment.

Sourcing applicants

Agencies need to have policies and procedures to help hiring managers:

- use their agency register or system
- source, gain consent from and assess applicants.

If a person approaches a staff member in the agency and expresses interest in a current or future vacancy, the staff member should direct them to the relevant applicant initiated register, system or process.

Assessing and selecting

- Before considering an applicant the hiring manager sets suitability requirements appropriate to the nature, level and tenure of the vacancy.
- Once a person gives their consent to be considered for the vacancy they become an applicant for the purposes of breach of standards claim procedures.
- Before commencing an assessment the hiring manager and applicant identify, declare and manage any [conflicts of interest](#).
- The hiring manager assesses the applicant against the suitability requirements of the position.

Appointing and record keeping

- The agency advises all applicants of the outcome and, if they are eligible to lodge a [breach of standards claim](#), informs them of their right to lodge a claim.
- A suitable applicant can be appointed to the position:
 - after the breach of standard claim period ends if no claim is received
 - after the breach of standard is resolved if a claim is received.
- For a recruitment pool, an applicant can be appointed if at least one vacancy of the type to which the claim relates is kept vacant until the claim is resolved.
- The agency keeps records to ensure transparency and reduce perceptions of bias and nepotism. Records include:
 - circumstance and rationale for using the applicant initiated recruitment method
 - how applicants were assessed against the suitability criteria
 - evidence considered in assessing suitability (for example interview notes, capability based responses, referee information)
 - how conflicts of interest were identified, managed and declared
 - decision to recommend an applicant (for example how the recommended applicant met the suitability requirements).

Managing registers, systems and processes

People interested in working for an agency are responsible for maintaining their profile in an agency applicant initiated register, system or process.

Agencies should periodically (annually at a minimum):

- prompt people on the register to confirm they are still interested in employment and to update their profile
- review their collection processes and/or systems to ensure they are effective and understood by hiring managers and applicants.

Avoiding bias and nepotism

Agencies need to establish policies and procedures to mitigate the risk of bias and nepotism when using applicant initiated approaches.

Mitigation may include:

- having a strong rationale for why a broader search was not required
- ensuring your agency register, system or other process for sourcing and providing applicants to a hiring manager for consideration is transparent
- managing factors that may indicate an applicant was pre-selected such as:
 - only one applicant is assessed for the vacancy and is recommended
 - an applicant has a close personal, familial or prior/current working relationship with the hiring manager or other agency staff
 - making decisions based on existing or prior personal or working relationships
- having appropriate documentation to support audit, review and probity requirements.

Resources

- [Commissioner's Instruction 48: Recruitment, Selection and Appointment to Permanent Vacancies](#)
- [Commissioner's Instruction 49: Recruitment, Selection and Appointment to Fixed Term Vacancies](#)
- [Commissioner's Instruction 50: Backfilling Temporary Vacancies](#)
- [Hiring Managers' Toolkit](#)