



**Foreword**

The purpose of this manual is to provide a factual and clear guide to recruitment and selection for all Public Servants in the Samoa Public Service.

The quality of staff selection decisions by Ministries has a major impact on the ability of Ministries to achieve their goals and objectives. Recruitment and selection is a critical part of human resource management undertaken by managers and it can have a real effect on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Samoa Public Service. Sound selection decisions attest to the capacity of the individual manager and the credibility and integrity of the Ministry as an employer. The fundamental principles of selection based on merit and ensuring procedural fairness must be adhered to at all times.

For further information regarding recruitment and selection please contact your Ministry's Human Resource Coordinator in the first instance.

**Chairman  
Public Service Commission**



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## Glossary of Terms

***The “Act”***

Samoa Public Service Act 2004.

***Appeals***

Refers to appeals lodged against provisional appointments to permanent positions.

***CEO***

The Chief Executive Officer of a Ministry; that is the ‘Head of a Ministry’ or ‘Head of a Constitutional Authority’.

***Code of Conduct***

The Code of Conduct in Section 19 of the Public Service Act 2004.

***Commission***

Public Service Commission constituted under Article 84 of the Constitution.

***Conflict of Interest***

A conflict of interest exists where an employee’s private interests, both financial and personal, could conflict with their official duties such that an independent observer might reasonably question whether the professional actions or decisions of that person are influenced by their own interests.

***Delegate***

Person to whom the Commission or the CEO has delegated authority to exercise the Commissions or CEOs powers.

***Discrimination***

Any action which specifically excludes, reduces opportunity or gives preference to a person or persons on the basis of personal characteristics irrelevant to the situation e.g marital status, ethnic origin, social affiliations, sexual orientation, religious denomination, physical impairment.

It can be direct (overt) for example when an actual policy or practice is discriminatory or indirect (covert) for example when a policy or practice appears to be non discriminatory but may actually be so when in operation.

***GoS***

Government of Samoa.

***HRC***

Human Resource Coordinator.

***Human resource management***

The process of acquiring and managing the employees of an organisation.

***Job description***

The written document detailing the tasks, duties, responsibilities and working conditions assigned by the CEO, pursuant to the Act, which are required to be performed by an employee.

**Merit**

Section 36 of the Act provides that the merit of a person in relation to a position must be assessed on the basis of:

- (a) the skills and abilities;
- (b) educational qualifications;
- (c) experience and past work performance; and
- (d) personal attributes,

of the person that are relevant to the selection criteria for the position.

**Principles of Employment**

Section 18 of the Act, establishes a philosophical framework for human resource management in the public sector. While the principles in this section are expressed in general terms, they do provide employees with an outline of their obligations and rights. They also constitute a set of standards against which we can measure new policies and procedures, and other initiatives at the Ministry level or on a sector-wide basis.

**Probation**

The first six months (or longer by up to 3 months as determined by the CEO) of an officer's appointment during which time their appointment can be confirmed or terminated at any stage in writing by the CEO.

**Procedural Fairness**

The concept of procedural fairness has two fundamental principles:

- ❑ A person directly affected by an impending decision must be afforded a fair hearing prior to that decision being made;
- ❑ The decision maker needs to act without bias in exercising his/her responsibilities.

**PSOC**

Public Service Official Circular.

**Qualifications**

The minimum level of formal education or experience, including recognition by or registration with a professional organisation, that a person must possess to enable them to be employed at a particular classification or designation level.

**Regulations**

Public Service Regulations 1979.

**Selection criteria**

The selection criteria must include skills (interpersonal or functional), knowledge, experience, formal qualification and professional affiliations<sup>1</sup>. A person is required to meet the above to enable them to perform the duties of that particular job. The importance of each criterion should be weighted according to the job requirements and must reflect the primary objectives and specific responsibilities, accountabilities and duties of the job.

<sup>1</sup> Example: To practice as a lawyer in Samoa, the person needs to be admitted as a Solicitor and Barrister with the Supreme Court of Samoa.



# 1

## Principles and Values Guiding Recruitment and Selection

This Section covers:

- *General Government of Samoa Public Service principles and values to be followed when selecting personnel*
- *Definition and application of the Merit Principle in particular in the selection process*

The following principles and values shall apply in the selection of staff for vacancies in the Government of Samoa Public Service.

Principles and Values	How these are incorporated into the Process
<b>Merit</b> s.36 and s18(a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appointments to the Public Service to be made on the basis of merit as stated in Section 18(a) and defined in Section 36 of the <i>Public Service Act 2004</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Fairness</b> s.18(b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decisions on employment matters must be made fairly and properly;</li> <li>▪ The use of an independent member on the Selection Panel in addition to the Line Manager and the Ministry HRC.</li> </ul>
<b>Impartiality</b> s.17(b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When making recruitment decisions acting without fear or favour;</li> <li>▪ Making decisions based on merit.</li> </ul>
<b>Respect</b> s.17(d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Treating your fellow worker with respect;</li> <li>▪ Treating members of the public with respect;</li> <li>▪ Does not mean giving any person special treatment or favours because of their social status.</li> </ul>
<b>Transparency</b> s.17(e)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Being clear and open about the making of decisions, and about the reasons on which those decisions are based;</li> <li>▪ Subject to confidentiality requirements being prepared to share organisational information.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability</b> s.17(f)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Knowing what you are responsible for delivering;</li> <li>▪ Being prepared and able to answer to others for the resources you have used, decisions you have made and for the results you have achieved.</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency and Effectiveness</b> s.17(g)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Getting good selection decisions to achieve Ministry's objectives as set out in Corporate and Management Plans;</li> <li>▪ A recruitment and selection process that takes the minimum amount of time whilst maintaining procedural fairness ensuring that the 'right' person for the job is selected.</li> </ul>

### More on 'Merit' as a Key Principle.

#### A Definition

Selection shall be based upon a systematic and careful assessment of merit. An appropriate definition is that which is provided in Section 36 of the *Public Service Act 2004*:

The merit of an officer for an appointment shall be determined by:

- (a) *skills and abilities;*
- (b) *educational qualifications;*
- (c) *experience and past work performance; and*
- (d) *personal attributes*



## 2

**Employment Instruction – A – Recruitment and Selection**

1. **TITLE :**            **RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**
2. **SUPERSEDES :** Previous policies on recruitment and selection
3. **REFERENCES :** Public Service Act 2004, Section 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40
4. **EFFECTIVE DATE :** 1 November 2005
5. **APPLICATION:**  
CEOs and Employees as per section 8 of the *Public Service Act 2004*

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Employment Instruction is to maintain appropriate recruitment and selection standards throughout the Samoa Public Service and to provide tools and resources to assist those undertaking recruitment and selection to maximise the probability of successful selection decisions.

Recruitment and selection in the Samoa Public Service is based on merit and should be undertaken in a fair and transparent way without bias, patronage or discrimination.

This Employment Instruction will be reviewed regularly and modified as required to reflect changes in legislation, policies and best practice.

The procedures below and the guidelines detailed in the Recruitment and Selection manual should be read in conjunction with this Employment Instruction.

**Definitions**

Please refer to Glossary of Terms

**Details**

The Samoa Public Service (SPS) has a commitment to deliver efficient and effective services to the community of Samoa. The Samoa Public Service is also committed to the development and wellbeing of its employees and to operate with integrity at all times.

Recruitment and selection is the process of attracting and appointing a person to a vacancy resulting from either the departure of a staff member, a restructure or creation of a new position. The person appointed may be sourced from the Samoa Public Service via a promotion or transfer, returning graduate or an external applicant.



Recruiting and selecting the “right person” for a vacancy is a critical human resource management process. It enables an organisation to meet its goals and objectives and as such should be seen as an objective of continuous improvement within the Samoa Public Service. In fact, it can be argued that the selection of staff is *the* most important responsibility exercised by managers. Sound selection outcomes attest to the capacity of the individual manager and the credibility and integrity of the Ministry as an employer. Research has shown the recruitment process can cost up to three times the salary of the position being filled. It is therefore imperative that all those involved in process of recruitment and selection endeavours to ensure no errors occur.

## Procedures

These procedures and more detailed guidelines outlined in the manual are aimed at managing the recruitment and selection process as reflected in the *Public Service Act 2004*. When undertaking this process it is the responsibility of those involved to ensure that the principles and values are integral to the recruitment and selection process. To ensure procedural fairness those involved must ensure they follow due process and act without bias.

### **Phase I: Pre-assessment**

1. ***The Vacancy Review*** – When the Line Manager or the Ministry recognises that there is a need to fill and advertise a vacant position it is a requirement that a job analysis be undertaken to ensure the new job description is updated to reflect any changes that may have occurred in the Ministry. If the Ministry determines that there needs to be a change in classification, salary or structure the approval of the Commission must be sought.

**Responsibility:** Line Manager to undertake Job Analysis and CEO to liaise with the Commission if changes are required.

2. ***Formulating Selection Criteria*** – The updated job description should then be used to formulate the selection criteria, a crucial component of the selection process. They must adequately reflect the job requirements and be classed as either essential or desirable. Figure 2 provides a 5 step process to assist in the preparation of selection criteria.

**Responsibility:** Line Manager

3. ***Advertising the Vacancy*** - Approval for a position to be filled and advertised should then be obtained from the CEO by completing Recruitment and Selection Form 1 – Request to Fill and Advertise a Position. This form is then sent to the Commission for advertisement in the PSOC. Other forms of media may be used at the discretion of the Ministry.

**Responsibility:** Line Manager and the Commission

4. ***The Selection Panel*** – The panel must comprise of three members, the Line Manager, the HRC and an Independent Member from another Ministry or private sector. The main priority is to have panel members who have an understanding of the position being filled; if possible a mix of genders is preferable.

**Responsibility:** HRC



## **Phase II: Assessment**

1. **Short listing Applicants** – As soon as practicable after the closing date for applications the Selection Panel should short list applicants using Form 3: Shortlist of Individual Applicant Form. If applicants do not meet all the essential criteria they must not be interviewed. Those applicants who are not shortlisted for interview must be notified as soon as possible with reasons for this decision.

**Responsibility:** The Selection Panel and HRC to inform applicants

2. **The Interview** – The interview should consist of a set of structured interview questions based on the selection criteria. There should be both open and closed questions. Thought should be given to the number of interviews held in one day plus the venue for the interview. There are three stages undertaken during an interview; the lead-in stage, body of the interview and conclusion. It is imperative that the panel maintains an open mind throughout the interview thus avoiding the pitfall of determining an applicant's suitability within the first few minutes. The Form 4: Interview Record for Individual Applicant has been provided to assist the panel during the interview.

**Responsibility:** The Selection Panel

3. **Obtaining Referee Reports** – Referee reports provide valuable insight into an applicants current work performance. It is desirable that reports be gained for all interviewed applicants preferably from those who can comment on their work performance such as current or previous supervisors. All panel members should participate in obtaining referee reports to avoid any misunderstandings. These reports should be included in the final selection report. Referees that are not nominated by the applicant may be contacted but if negative comments are provided, the applicant, under the principles of procedural fairness, must be given the opportunity to reply.

**Responsibility:** The Selection Panel

4. **Evaluation and making Recommendation** –Form 5 – Selection Outcome Report should be used to determine which applicant is the most suitable and provide a recommendation for appointment. This information including other relevant material such as referee reports should be considered to determine the most meritorious applicant. All panel members must ensure that they are objective in their analysis of applicants. If there are extensive differences in opinion between panel members it is preferable that the issues be worked through thoroughly to determine whether or not a consensus can be reached. If this is unable to occur separate selection reports should be prepared by the relevant panel member with their alternative recommendation.

**Responsibility:** The Selection Panel

## **Phase III: Post Assessment**

1. **The Selection Decision** – The CEO should review the selection process and all the documentation to determine the accuracy of the information contained in the selection report(s). If the CEO accepts the recommendation of the selection panel



s/he should proceed to appoint or promote that person. If the CEO does not agree with the recommendation s/he may:

- a. Ask the Panel to reconsider their recommendation and perhaps reinterview the top applicants;
- b. Readvertise the position and start the process again, in this instance previous applicants would be told they do not need to re-apply; or
- c. Appoint an applicant from the list of eligible applicants who in the opinion of the CEO is the most meritorious applicant.

**Responsibility:** CEO

2. ***Offer of Employment*** – Once the CEO has approved the selection decision the successful candidate should be notified and offered the role. Employment documentation needs to be prepared so the successful applicant can accept the offer. In the documentation working conditions need to be clearly outlined including the probationary period. The successful candidate should be given 2 to 5 working days to accept the offer.

**Responsibility:** Line Manager and HRC

3. ***Unsuccessful applicants notified and Feedback Sessions Offered*** – Once the position has been accepted by the successful applicant the unsuccessful applicants should be notified (by letter and / or telephone). Feedback sessions with panel members should be offered to those applicants who were unsuccessful during interview. Every effort should be made at this point to address any concerns the applicant has in relation to why they were not successful in gaining the position. An unsuccessful applicant should be given a maximum of 3 working days to request a feedback session.

**Responsibility:** HRC, Chairperson

4. ***Provisional Appointment Notified in PSOC*** – Once the offer of employment has been accepted by the successful applicant and unsuccessful applicants have been notified by letter and / or telephone, Form 5: Selection Outcome Report should be sent to the Commission for notification of the Provisional Appointment in the next available PSOC. If an appeal is going to be lodged by one of the applicants it must be done within 14 days of the Provisional Appointment appearing in the PSOC.

**Responsibility:** HRC and the Commission

### **Post Selection**

1. ***Confirmation of Provisional Appointment*** – If no appeal has been lodged then the placement of the selected applicant can be confirmed by the Commission in the next available PSOC.

**Responsibility:** The Commission

2. ***Commencement and Induction*** – It is the responsibility of the HRC to ensure that all the relevant documentation has been completed and provided to the Commission



and Ministry of Finance. A suitable induction programme should also be provided to the commencing employee by the Ministry.

**Responsibility:** HRC

### **Appeal Management**

If applicants are not satisfied with the outcome of a recruitment and selection exercise they have the opportunity to lodge an appeal. This must be done in writing within 14 days of the Provisional Appointment being notified in the PSOC. Appeals can only be lodged on the basis that:

- The aggrieved applicant believes they are the more meritorious applicant.

The appeal will lapse if:

- The appellant is promoted to a position of the same or an equivalent grade;
- The appointment or promotion is cancelled; or
- The position becomes vacant.

The appeal process is managed by the Commission in consultation with the relevant Ministry. Please refer to the Managing Appeals Employment Instruction for further detail.

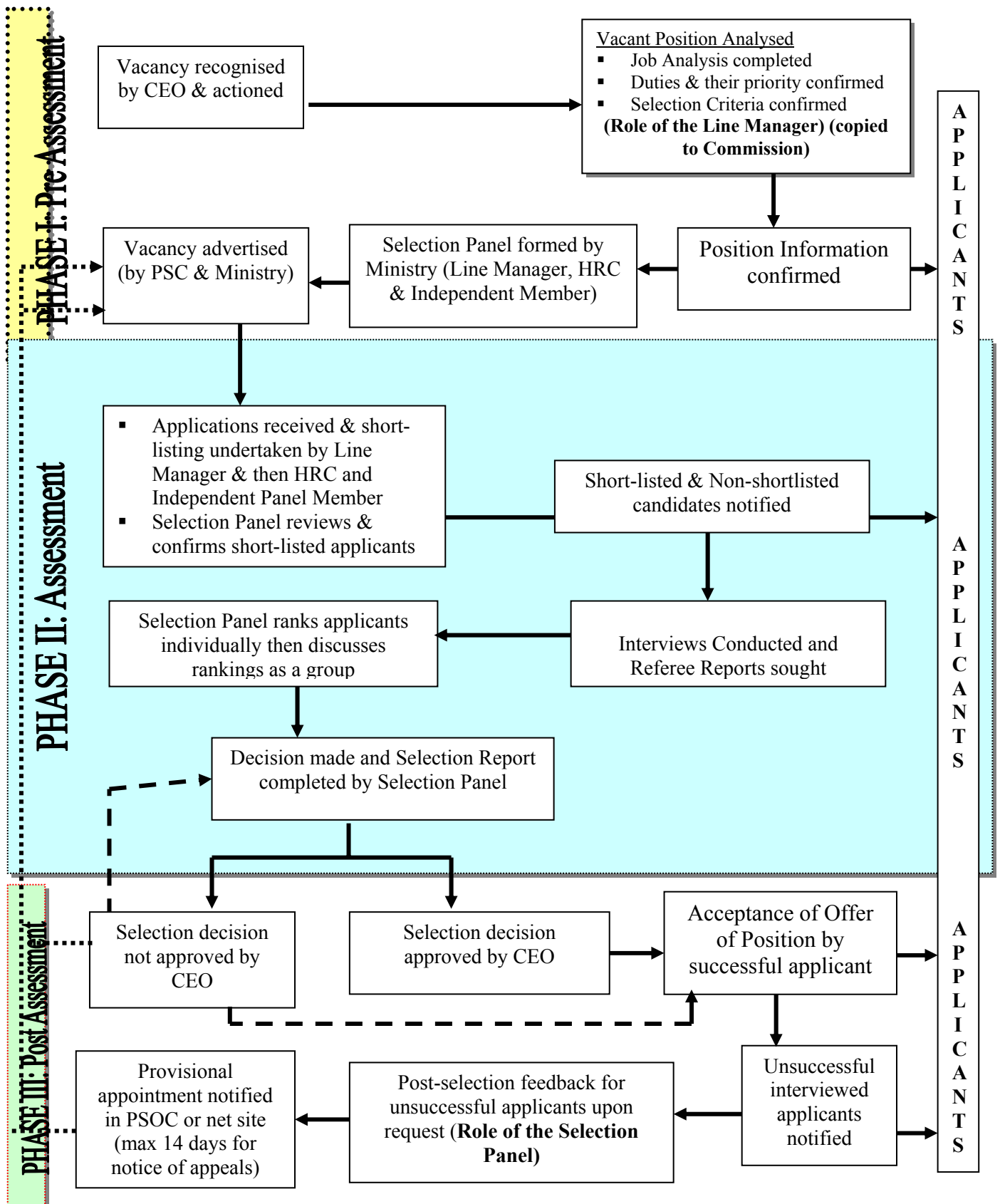
### **Tools, Forms and Templates**

- Figure 1 – Recruitment and Selection Process Diagrammatically
- Figure 2 – Six Step Process to Writing Selection Criteria
- Form 1 – Request to Fill and Advertise a Vacancy
- Form 2 – Job Application Form
- Form 3 – Shortlist of Individual Applicant Form
- Form 4 – Interview Record for Individual Applicant
- Form 5 – Selection Outcome Report
- Recruitment and Selection Checklist
- Template 1 – Provisional Appointment Letter
- Template 2 – Unsuccessful Letter
- Template 3 – Confirmation Letter
- Before you Apply



Figure 1.

**GoS RECRUITMENT and SELECTION PROCESS**





## 3 Phase I: Pre Assessment

### 3.1 The Vacancy Review

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**This Section covers:**

- *Processes involved in analysing the vacancy, including the Job Analysis Process and its importance*
  - *Role of good job descriptions in effective management*
  - *How to write a good job description*
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#### 3.1.4 Need for the Vacancy Review

Jobs can change over time due to any number of reasons which might include:

- Technological change;
- Re-organisation of the work unit or ministry; an
- Policy.

Such changes are not always reflected in the documentation describing the job.

The first stage in ensuring the best possible “fit” between the job to be done and the person selected to fill it, is to have a clear picture of the job itself as it currently operates, and then to consider how it should be operating. This picture is developed through:

- ❑ undertaking a Job Analysis; and
- ❑ preparation of a concise and up-to-date job description.

The **responsibility for the vacancy review lies with the line manager of the job** and human resource management specialists (Human Resource Co-ordinators) can also be called upon to assist. It is recommended that expert help in this area be sought prior to the preparation of the job description, particularly if consideration of the discussion questions below indicates that there have been major changes in the job since the last review, or that the job needs to be substantially restructured.

#### 3.1.2 Analysing the Vacancy – The Job Analysis Process

When assessing the vacancy it is important to have, a clear understanding of the job. This can be achieved by doing a job analysis which is a process of obtaining the current and genuine job content including, skills, knowledge, abilities which link to the performance measures that are ultimately required for the position.

#### 3.1.5 The Job Analysis Step

Of all the sixteen steps in the recruitment and selection process, perhaps the most critical lies with Step 2 – *Vacant Position Analysis*. Given that applicants are assessed by the Selection Panel based upon clear selection criteria, the success of the selection process depends upon the accuracy of these criteria.



Given also that it is the Job Analysis process which determines the extent to which the job duties are relevant and the resulting selection criteria are accurate, it is critical for the effectiveness of the overall selection process that the job analysis process:

- is professionally completed; and
- in a timeframe that makes the results relevant to the current role of the position.

### Discussion Questions

**The following questions may help determine how the job is currently structured and whether or not a restructure is required to better meet the goals of the work unit and the Ministry.**

- *What is currently the function of this unit/Ministry?*
- *What is the primary objective of this job and how does it relate to the functions of this work unit and Ministry?*
- *Do policy and planning changes have implications for the role of this job?*
- *What level of influence does the job have and how does this relate to the purpose of the division/section?*
- *What specific tasks, activities and duties are carried out in this job and have these changed since the time of the last job review?*
- *What is the most complex or difficult feature of this job?*
- *What level of supervision is needed in this job?*
- *What level of financial accountability does the job currently have?*
- *What qualifications, skills, experience and knowledge are necessary to perform this job?*
- *What challenges, limitations and developments are affecting this job, and what implications does this have on the way the job is structured?*
- *Is there a clear need to re-fill the job? (Other alternatives such as reallocation of work within the organisation or outsourcing could warrant consideration.)*

Consideration of these questions will assist in developing accurate and consistent job descriptions.

### **3.1.6 The Role of Job Descriptions in Effective People Management**

Clearly written and accurate Job Descriptions are **the** basis for line managers to not only effectively select but also manage their staff. In addition to underlying sound selection processes, job descriptions also provide a basis for:

- clarification of expectations between supervisor and employee;
- induction, probation and performance management;
- staff development and career path plans;
- clarification and planning of the work of an organisational unit; and
- succession planning.



The time spent writing a job description, based on previous job analysis, is time well spent. **At the very least**, job descriptions must be updated **prior** to advertisement to ensure that the tasks are still appropriate and that the selection criteria are relevant to identifying the best applicant.

### 3.1.7 General Pointers on Writing Job Descriptions

**Statement of Primary Objective:** Begin writing a new job description or reviewing an existing job description by making a statement that sets out in a single sentence the **Primary objective** of the position. That is, the statement should say what the *purpose* of the job is; or what its overall contribution is to the aims of the Ministry. For example, a Maintenance Manager would have as its Primary Objective: *‘To ensure that the major assets of the Ministry are maintained in a fully operational state in order to support the attainment of its objectives’*. You will find later that the value of having a primary objective statement for each job enables you to decide which duties are *essential* and which selection criteria are also *essential*.

Some general pointers on writing job descriptions follow:

- ❑ The job description should focus on the **job** itself – and *not* on the present or any past incumbents of the job;
- ❑ Do **not** copy old job descriptions as these are usually out-of-date, lacking in detail, or described differently to the sector-wide format;
- ❑ When describing the duties and/or responsibilities, consideration should be given to the “what, how, and why” of each duty and/or responsibility. i.e, *What* is the duty? *How* is it done? And for *What* reason or end result?;
- ❑ Commence each statement of duty and/or responsibility with a verb (e.g. *formulate work plans, monitors power systems, supervises project teams etc.*); and
- ❑ Do not become preoccupied with unusual, insignificant or short-term demands of the job. The **key** duties and/or responsibilities that determine how the job best contributes to the work goals of the work unit are what should be focused on.

## 3.2 Formulating Selection Criteria

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**This Section covers:**

- *The role of selection criteria*
  - *What selection criteria is*
  - *Essential and Desirable selection criteria*
  - *How to write good selection criteria*
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### 3.2.1 Role of Selection Criteria in the Recruitment and Selection Process

**Selection Criteria** are a crucial component of the recruitment and selection process and are the basis for:

- short-listing;
- interview questions;
- comparative assessment;
- the selection report; and
- post-selection feedback.



Selection criteria are therefore the “backbone” of the entire process, but are sometimes misunderstood or ignored. Selection criteria must be based on the job description. It is important that the selection criteria adequately reflect the job requirements as stated in the primary objective. There must also be a clear link between the specific responsibilities of the job and the selection criteria.

### 3.2.2 *What are Selection Criteria?*

The selection criteria must include skills (interpersonal or functional), knowledge, experience, formal qualification and professional affiliations<sup>2</sup>. A person is required to meet the above to enable them to perform the duties of that particular job. The importance of each criterion should be weighted according to the job requirements and must reflect the primary objective and specific duties and responsibilities of the job.

In comparison:

#### **A JOB DESCRIPTION is:**

A word picture of the **job** described in terms of:

- primary objective;
- specific duties and responsibilities;
- authorities and limitations.

*while*

#### **SELECTION CRITERIA are:**

A word picture describing the attributes of the ideal **person** who would best be able to carry out the job. The criterion should be classed as essential or desirable. The criteria are formulated under the following main headings:

- skills (Interpersonal or Functional);
- knowledge;
- experience;
- formal qualification requirements;
- personal attributes; and
- professional affiliation.

The selection criteria are used to:

- provide a common standard of assessment against which all applicants can be evaluated;
- provide a structure for developing interview questions and the interview itself; and
- minimise the possibility of irrelevant or discriminatory matters being taken into account and perhaps adversely affecting some applicants.

#### **‘Essential’ Selection Criteria**

**Essential criteria** are those that are **absolutely necessary** for successful performance in the job. Some professional categories have automatic essential criteria (e.g. doctors must have recognised medical training). The human resources sections of Ministries can provide advice on which categories of employment have mandatory formal qualifications. If the essential criteria are too narrow it can restrict the pool of potential applicants reducing the options available to Ministries.

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<sup>2</sup> Example: To practice as a lawyer in Samoa, the person needs to be admitted as a Solicitor and Barrister with the Supreme Court of Samoa.



**Failure to meet listed ‘essential’ criteria must result in the applicant being deemed unsuitable for the job.** It is therefore imperative that particular care be given to determining which criteria, are essential for optimum job performance, whilst at the same time acknowledging that all jobs require a certain level of skill, knowledge and expertise. The following examples may assist in clarifying this issue:

***Example 1:***

Listing specific knowledge of Government of Samoa legislation, e.g. the *Public Service Act 2004* as an essential criterion may limit the field of potential applicants drawn to a vacancy. What will often be essential is the applicant’s ability to analyse and interpret legislation. It may be better to list the requirement for knowledge of this specific Act as desirable only.

***Example 2:***

Listing the writing of cabinet submissions and ministerial correspondence as an essential criterion may prevent persons from the private sector from applying for a vacancy. It would seem that the real requirement is a demonstrated ability to produce sensitive and confidential written documentation to a high standard that are logical and fluent. Therefore, this latter requirement should be listed as an essential criterion whilst the requirement to write cabinet submissions and ministerial correspondence would be better listed as desirable. The logic here is that if the applicant is already in possession of the skills to write submissions, reports and other correspondence, writing cabinet submissions and ministerial correspondence can be developed on the job with minimal training since the potential applicant would already have technical writing skills.

### **‘Desirable’ Selection Criteria**

**Desirable criteria** are those which would greatly assist the person in doing the job but if the person did *not* possess them it would *not* mean they were incapable of performing in the job. Such attributes may not be essential because it could be expected that the job holder would acquire them during employment. Desirable criteria may include specific knowledge about how a particular Ministry prefers to function. It should be noted that applicants meeting both essential and desirable criteria will be the most competitive. Criteria on experience and knowledge should *not* be so specific that only a person who has worked in a particular area or Ministry would be able to meet them. The following examples may assist in clarifying this issue:

***Example 1:***

An advertisement for a Senior Salaries Operator should list experience with automated payroll and personnel information systems as an essential criterion, with experience on *Persys* (personnel computerised system used by PSC or PELICAN and MANUMEA used by the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture) as desirable.

***Example 2:***

The ability to interpret and apply legislation could be an essential criterion whilst knowledge of, and experience with, a particular Ministry’s legislation would be better listed as desirable.



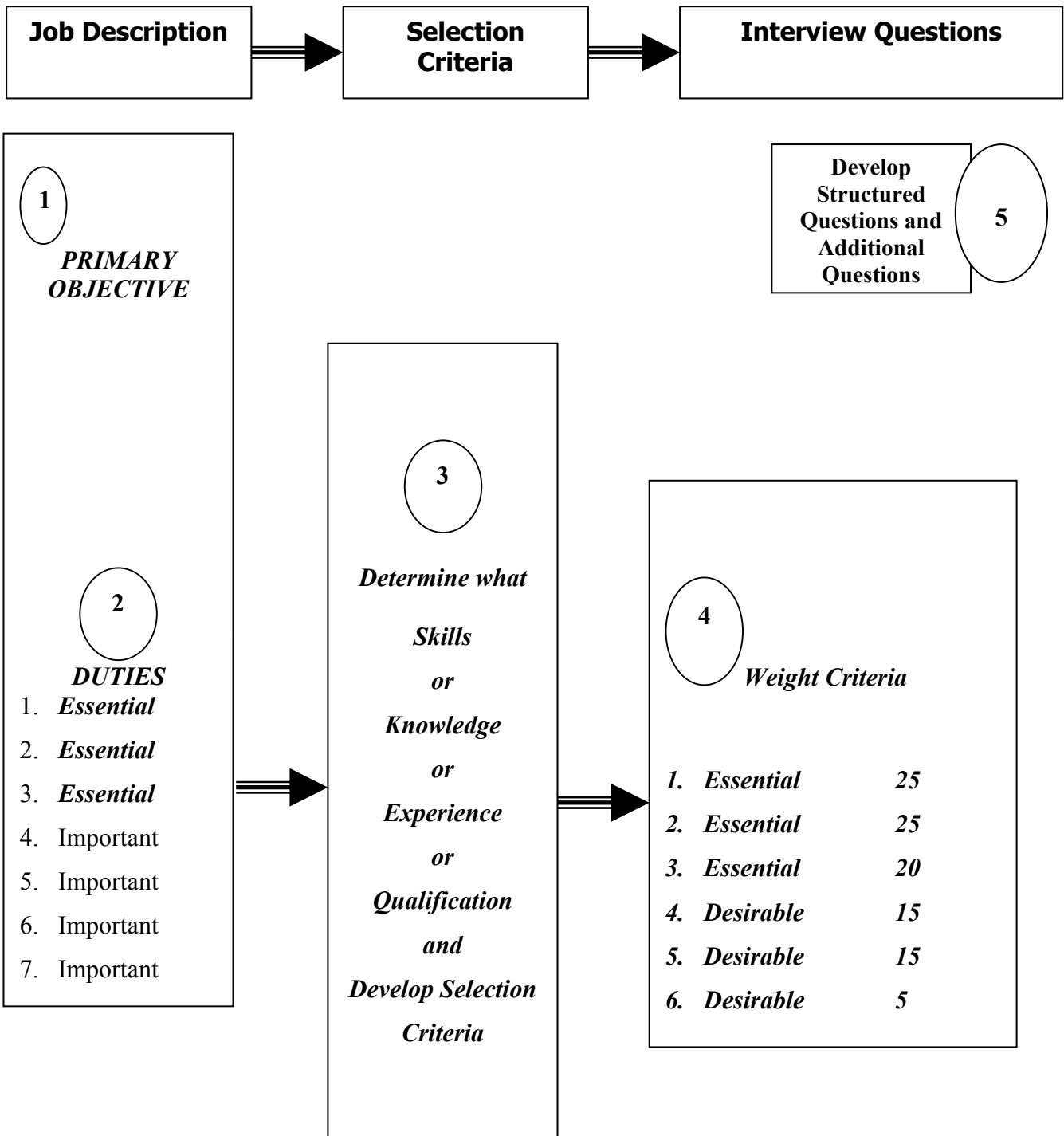
### 3.2.3 *Writing Selection Criteria*

There is a five (5) step process in the preparation of selection criteria and interview questions as illustrated in Figure 2 below:

- Step 1.** Review the statement concerning the primary objective of the position and then the various duties and make sure that they are still relevant to the present position. By referring to the Primary Objective, note which duties are ‘essential’ for achieving that objective (and hence the remaining ones are ‘important’).
- Step 2.** Taking the ‘essential’ duties first, identify whether it is a skill, or a specific knowledge, or a certain experience, or a particular qualification that is required for that essential duty to be successfully performed. A statement should then be written to clarify its importance to the job and hence representing the selection criterion for that duty. (see below for guidelines on this)
- Step 3.** Once all the selection criteria have been written the next step is to identify which are ‘essential’ and which are ‘desirable’. It is recommended that the number of selection criteria used should reflect the job requirements.
- Step 4.** This step requires rating these selection criteria in order of importance and then weighting them.
- Step 5.** The final step is to prepare a series of questions (2 to 3 at most) for each selection criteria which you believe will enable you to assess the extent to which each of the applicants interviewed satisfies the selection criteria. You may also wish to write additional questions to use on a case by case basis for clarification based on certain aspects of each applicant’s response.



Figure 2: Five Step Process to Writing Selection Criteria



**The end result should be:**

- a Job Description that is relevant and comprehensive in terms of its primary objective, the duties and responsibilities to be performed and the relative importance of those duties;
- a set of well written selection criteria clearly showing what a person should demonstrate in order to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position competently;
- a clear indication of the relative importance amongst those criteria as shown by the weighting allocated to each of them; and
- a set of structured questions that will be used at interview to enable the Selection Panel members to ascertain the extent to which each of the applicants meets the selection criteria.

**Further pointers.....**

- The importance of all this information lies not only in its primary role of assessing the most meritorious applicant but also in clearly spelling out for the ‘successful’ applicant the key expectations required of them as well as providing a basis for any future considerations to do with staff development and career management.
- When writing each criterion, it is advisable to consider how you will assess it. For example, “*Experience in the preparation of high level reports*” may require the applicant to produce written samples. “*The ability to maintain confidentiality*” would need to be probed with a referee. “*An understanding of the process of policy formulation*” could be ascertained at interview and through a referee.
- Ministries should exercise extreme care in the use of *confidential* documents as part of the selection process. Applicants should not provide confidential documents, or documents of a sensitive nature, such as cabinet submissions, ministerial, etc to support job applications. The experience and abilities of applicants in these areas can be verified with supervisors or referees or, if required, suitable arrangements could be made with the Ministry concerned for documents to be viewed by the Selection Panel under terms and conditions set by the Ministry.
- It is also advisable to consider the wording of each selection criteria. Be clear in the type of skills you require successful applicants to have. For example, ‘leadership ability’ may be expressed as an ‘ability to communicate a strategic vision for the Ministry’. Whilst ‘communication skills’ may be expressed as the ‘ability to present oral material, and communicate in writing, in a fluent and logical manner’.
- Likewise, *conceptual* and *analytical* skills are difficult to assess and might be better defined as the ‘ability to identify priorities in complex problems’, ‘integrate different sources of information, viewing work issues from many perspective’s’ or ‘generate workable solutions to problems’.

***Note: If it is not possible to ascertain a means of assessing the applicant against the criteria, it should be deleted.***



### 3.3 Advertising the Vacancy

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*This Section covers:*

- *The requirement to advertise vacancies in accordance with the Public Service Act 2004*
  - *Issues to consider when advertising*
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#### 3.3.1 Advertising Format

The purpose of the following guidelines is to provide assistance to Ministries in the use of job information in the advertising of vacant positions. As with all other aspects of the recruitment and selection process the advertising process is also guided by the values and principles as outlined in Part 1 of this Manual.

**The following should represent the major sections and content of the advertisement – in the PSOC or any other print medium used.**

**a) Basic Job Information**

This should comprise any information that identifies the job. Including: the title; the grade; the Ministry where the job is located; who the position reports to; and the number of personnel supervised (if any).

**b) Duties/Responsibilities**

Information about the duties of the position need only be brief provided that potential applicants are given a broad understanding of the nature of the job. Accordingly, the advertisement should include the Primary Objective of the position and key duties and or responsibilities.

**c) Selection Criteria**

The Selection Criteria are the most important pieces of information to provide to potential applicants. The information in the advertisement should spell out:

- What are the *essential* selection criteria;
- What are the *desirable* selection criteria; and
- The fact that *only* those applicants meeting or satisfying the *essential* selection criteria will be considered for interview. [**Note:** This is critical otherwise the advertisement could mislead potential applicants and possibly result in unnecessary work on the part of the line manager and HR person in dealing with applications that do not meet the minimum standards].

**d) Contact Person**

When advertising a position a Ministry must designate an employee (potentially the Line Manager) who can be contacted to obtain relevant position details/information. The Contact Person:

- Provides a point of reference for any potential applicants who may need clarification about the job. It is imperative that it is confirmed with the applicant that they are aware that they must meet all the essential criteria if they are to be considered for an interview; and



- Provides a point of reference for any potential applicants to obtain a copy of the Job Application Form (Form 2). Likewise, they can then be given any assistance they need by way of instructions in completing the new application form – especially in relation to Section 6: Justifying their meeting the selection criteria.

e) **Closing Date and Recruitment Pack pick-up Details**

As with any recruitment exercise, it is important to clearly state the closing date for the receipt of applications and that no applications will be received/considered after the close of business on that date. This should be clearly stated at the bottom of the advertisement. Generally ten (10) working days from the date of advertising should be sufficient to enable potential applicants to gather the recruitment pack<sup>3</sup>, make the necessary inquiries and then complete the form and submit their application.

It needs to be made clear from where (the actual location) the application form (Form 2) can be obtained.

The appropriate form for facilitating the advertisement of the vacant position - following approval by the CEO - is **R&S Form 1– Request to Fill and Advertise a Vacancy**

### 3.3.2 *Placing The Advertisement*

Pursuant to Section 34 of the *Public Service Act 2004* a CEO may advertise in the PSOC along with any other media to ensure maximum opportunity for highly competent potential applicants to be attracted to the position.

The placing of advertisements is usually the responsibility of the HRC. It is the line manager's responsibility to ensure that the vacancy notice submitted to the Commission is accurate and concise, to best reflect the nature of the job. The line manager may also recommend appropriate places to advertise for specialist and technical staff. Don't limit yourself in this area. If you limit your field, you will limit the quality of applicants you attract.

Some of the issues to consider when advertising in the media include:

- cost of advertisement;
- impact of the advertisement;
- time restrictions in filling the vacancy;
- likelihood of filling the vacancy through PSOC advertisement;
- any Government of Samoa Public Service size and format requirements for the placing of advertisements; and
- language used in the advertisement to attract applicants, that is, simple and clear.

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<sup>3</sup> A Recruitment Pack consists of the Job Application Form (Form 2), instructions on how to complete their application form, a copy of the Job Description for the advertised position and any other information the Ministry sees as relevant.



## 3.4 The Selection Panel

*This Section covers:*

- *Recommended composition and skills of Selection Panels;*
- *Responsibilities of Selection Panels; and*
- *Processes involved in short-listing applicants.*

### 3.4.1 Composition of Selection Panels

A basic principle of selection is that the process shall be carried out by a panel, as distinct from one person. The panel method of selection offers the advantages that accrue from the multiple insights, observation and experience of the panel members. These advantages, however, will only be evident if the selection process is carefully organised and planned, and each member of the panel is fully aware of their responsibilities.

In order to apply the selection process principles, the following specific recommendations on the composition of a Selection Panel are made:

- a) Panels should consist of **three (3) persons**;
- b) It is preferable that the Panel comprise members of **both genders** regardless of the gender of the applicants to be interviewed;
- c) Panel members should not be from the same Ministry. The **panel must contain an Independent Member** from another Ministry or outside the service who has knowledge and understanding of the position being filled. (Consider using expertise and experience outside the Government of Samoa , e.g. private sector);
- d) Panels should include an **experienced chairperson**;
- e) Each member of the panel should have -
  - i) an **understanding of the position** and its relationship to other aspects of the Ministry; and
  - ii) **staff selection skills**.
- f) In addition, each panel member is expected to have an **understanding of the principle of procedural fairness** as defined in this manual;
- g) It is preferable that members of the **panel hold jobs equal to, or above the level of the vacancy**.
- h) It is important that each **panel member understands the role of the Selection Panel**. It is recommended that a copy of the roles and responsibilities of the Selection Panel be provided to each member of the panel.

### 3.4.2 Responsibilities and Accountabilities of Selection Panels

a) **The role of the Selection Panel.**

The role of the Selection Panel is to assess all applicants and determine which applicant they believe should be successful in securing the vacant position. The panel then advises the CEO (or delegate) accordingly.

**To this end, each panel member has the following responsibilities:**



- i. to **declare any conflicts of interest** to the panel Chairperson and act without bias ensuring that procedural fairness is afforded to all applicants;
- ii. to **be familiar with the job description** for the vacancy;
- iii. to **check the selection criteria** for the vacancy and request amendments if unsuitable before a position is advertised
- iv. to **determine appropriate forms of assessment** which may be used in addition to the selection interview, e.g. case studies, etc and to provide short-listed applicants with appropriate preparation time;
- v. to **short-list applicants against the selection criteria** listed in the job description, and to document reasons for not short-listing;
- vi. to **plan an interview structure** so that all applicants are asked a set of structured questions and are assessed against the selection criteria;
- vii. to **conduct the interview** with an open mind and evaluate applicants only once the outcomes of all forms of assessment are known;
- viii. to **conduct any other forms of assessment** as required;
- ix. **Chairperson** of the panel to **contact referees** for each applicant – It is desirable that reports be gained for all interviewed applicants preferably from those who can comment on their work performance such as current or previous supervisors;
- x. to **attempt to reach a consensus** on a relative ranking of applicants through careful consideration of all information made available to the panel;
- xi. to recommend to the CEO the most meritorious applicant for selection to the job via the **selection report** by filling in Form 5;
- xii. to **keep confidential the outcome of the selection process** until such time as the panel recommendation has been approved by the CEO and applicants are officially advised;
- xiii. to **offer and provide**, if requested, **post-selection feedback** to all interviewed applicants after the formal selection decision has been made and accepted;
- xiv. to **retain all Selection Panel background/reference documentation** until confirmation of the appointment;
- xv. at the completion of the selection process all documentation including the selection report and recommendation should be retained on a confidential job file and forwarded to the Ministry's Corporate Services Division; and
- xvi. to be held equally accountable through the Principles of Employment and the Code of Conduct for recruitment and selection decisions.



**b) Role of the Chairperson**

The chairperson of the panel has the following additional responsibilities:

- i) to ensure that the selection process is conducted in accordance with the Public Service Principles of Employment;
- ii) to ensure that each panel member makes an effort to contribute to the selection process in carrying out their responsibilities as listed above;
- iii) to ensure that panel members are aware of their obligations to avoid any conflict of interest, arising out of the selection process;
- iv) where a panel member declares a conflict of interest, to assess the situation and decide whether the panelist should be replaced;
- v) to ensure that the selection report is professionally presented, and accurately reflects the process carried out by the panel;
- vi) to ensure that the selection process is efficiently carried out;
- vii) if the panel is unable to reach a consensus on the recommended applicant, to ensure that the dissenting member prepares a minority report stating the reasons for differences in opinion. This may take the form of a separate selection report prepared against the selection criteria for the position.

### **3.5 Applicants and their Applications**

It is the Applicant's responsibility to:

- Indicate aspects of their work experience which demonstrate their ability to satisfy each criterion;
- Complete the application in a true and accurate way (failure to do so will disqualify the Applicant) and attach supporting documents to assist panel members with their check and short-listing; and
- Provide supporting documentation should they be short-listed for interview.

All applications must reach the Ministry by close of business on the date stated in the advertisement. Any applications received after that time must not and cannot be considered unless the approval of the CEO is obtained.



## 4

**Phase II: Assessment**

### 4.1 Short-listing Applicants

The purpose of short-listing is to *identify those applicants who warrant further consideration*. The normal process is to consider each applicant against the selection criteria. It may be useful to seek referee reports prior to interview, to help clarify an applicant's ability to meet the selection criteria. This approach requires care and discretion. It is also good practice to advise unsuccessful applicants that they are not being short-listed for interview about this as soon as possible, **and if appropriate to provide reasons for that decision**.

The advantages of providing early advice and reason(s) for decisions to those applicants not short-listed are:

- i) they may respond with further information to support their claim of suitability; and
- ii) it reduces the likelihood of an appeal at a later stage.

Only applicants who meet **all essential selection criteria** are to be shortlisted for the interview. Failure to demonstrate claims against one or more of the *essential* criteria is sufficient to exclude an applicant from further consideration.

In the event of there being only one applicant for a position, the Selection Panel must satisfy itself that the applicant meets the **essential** criteria for the position to enable them to conduct the interview and make a recommendation to the CEO (or delegate).

In short-listing applicants for interview, panel members should have reference to Section 6 of the Application Form, where applicants show they have the necessary attributes (skills, knowledge, personal attributes, experience and qualifications) that makes them worthy of being considered for inclusion in the short list.

This information can then be used by the line manager and subsequently by the HRC to ensure that those interviewed do satisfy the *essential* selection criteria as a minimum. See appendix for **Form 2 – Job Application Form**.

**Form 3 – Shortlist of Individual Applicant** (See Appendix for R&S Form 3: Shortlist of Individual Applicant Form) has been designed to facilitate the short listing process by setting out for *each* applicant the selection panel members' decision as to the extent to which each applicant meet the *essential* selection criteria.

The responsibility for the task of short-listing falls upon the Selection Panel members. Each member should complete Form 3 and indicate their endorsement of the short listed applicants by signing the form. This implies a commitment on the part of all selection panel members to the **merit principle**.



## 4.2 The Interview

### *This section covers:*

- ❑ *Processes involved in arranging the interview schedule and venue;*
- ❑ *Steps involved in planning the selection interview;*
- ❑ *Stages involved in conducting the selection interview.*

### 4.2.1 *Communicating to Applicants*

One of the important issues in Recruitment and Selection is to keep applicants informed throughout the selection process. Hence the following must be done to ensure this occurs:

- All applications should be acknowledged as soon as possible after being received by the Ministry; and
- Those who have been short-listed should be advised accordingly and invited to an interview.

### 4.2.2 *Arranging the Interview Schedule*

Good interviewing requires intense concentration.

- It is recommended that no more than six be scheduled for any one day.
- Ten to fifteen minutes should be allowed between interviews to allow for discussion and note taking.
- The period between interviews can also be useful if the previous interview goes beyond the scheduled period. It is unfair and inconsiderate to have the next applicant waiting after their scheduled time.
- Time should also be set aside after the interviews for conducting any further assessments of applicants, obtaining referee reports and evaluating applicants.
- An appropriate period (3 working days) of notice should be given to all short-listed applicants prior to the interview.

### 4.2.2 *Arranging the Interview Venue*

The Selection Panel should arrange a suitable venue taking into account factors such as:

- room location, room appearance, seating arrangements and access for people with disabilities;
- The room should also be private and free from interruption and telephone calls. Chairs should be arranged prior to commencing the interview so that the applicant is within comfortable speaking distance and can make eye contact with each member of the panel; and
- If the interviewee has any special requirements it should be ascertained prior to the commencement of the interview.



### 4.2.3 *Planning The Interview*

It is impossible to conduct fair and successful interviews without planning. The selection panel should meet prior to the interview day to develop an interview strategy and to decide if other forms of assessment will be used. The interview strategy should cover the following:

- who will be chairperson?;
- how the room will be set up?;
- who will introduce the panel?;
- what basic line of questioning will be followed and who will be responsible for each area?; and
- who will follow up on specific issues relating to individual applications?.

The interview strategy or approach should be written up and distributed to all panel members for reference during the interview.

Each panel member should have a copy of the applications and have read them in detail and determined any possible inconsistencies prior to the interview.

Panel members should mark each application with points to be followed up during the interview.

### 4.2.4 *Conducting the Interview*

All stages of the interview are aimed at establishing the applicant's claims against the selection criteria. While the panel should ensure that each applicant is given the opportunity to respond to structured questioning, careful reading of the applications should have revealed areas for individual probing via additional questions.

**For example:**

- “While you worked at Ministry X you had supervisory responsibilities. Could you please tell us how many people you supervised and how you structured your work group?” or
- “You said you have been involved in the development of transport policy while you were at Ministry X. Could you please describe the nature of your involvement and what you learnt about policy formulation generally.”

Careful probing of such details will help in getting a clearer understanding of the applicant's experience building a total picture to assist in the evaluation. Interviews consist of a lead-in, a body and a conclusion each with a different purpose as discussed below.

**Each stage has a different purpose as follows:**

#### **A. The lead-in stage:**

This stage is where the panel members are introduced by name and job title, and an overview of the interview process is provided. The establishment of a supportive climate in which applicants are best able to reveal what they might bring to the job is critical.

Unfortunately research overwhelmingly shows that the majority of panelist tend to make up their minds about the suitability of an applicant within the first three minutes of an interview, with the rest of the interview confirming their initial response. It is therefore crucial that panel members consciously strive to keep an open mind and suspend judgement about suitability of an applicant until they have all the



information needed to make an assessment. Panel members should keep in mind that applicants are tense and nervous during the introductory phase of an interview.

An aggressive or intimidating style of interviewing will serve to show only how an applicant responds under a certain type of pressure, which may have nothing to do with their ability to do the job.

A supportive climate can easily be established by commencing with relatively simple “settling in” questions during the introductory phase. For example "Tell us why you applied for this position?"

## **B. The Body of the interview:**

This is where information is exchanged by following a basic line of questioning related to each selection criterion and following up interesting leads from the answers. The structured questions should be concise and unambiguous and asked of all interviewees. Interviewers may wish to follow up specific points gained from critical reading of individual applications via additional probing questions. Questioning is a key technique for panel members during this stage. Interviewers should be familiar with the use of two main types of questions:

- ***open:*** encourage an applicant to do most of the talking by allowing detailed answers, begin with: why; how; where; when; what etc. e.g. “What do you see as the major new skills you have developed in your current job?”
- ***closed:*** only allow for very specific, short, or yes/no answers and can be used to clarify points, e.g. “How long have you been in your current job?” or “How many people do you supervise?”

Skilful use of both types of questions can help build up a complete picture of the applicant in terms of both “facts” and how they “operate”. Particular attention should be paid to the issue of potentially discriminatory questions. Discrimination problems usually don’t arise from the intent of the question, but from how it is asked.

The following guidelines may be used for formulating non-discriminatory interview questions:

- i. Define the requirements of any vacancy and use these as the basis for interview questions. Use the same approach for all applicants;
- ii. Only ask legitimate, job-related questions;
- iii. Don’t avoid sensitive areas as you can easily assume the wrong information. Instead obtain accurate information to ensure you do not discriminate;
- iv. In sensitive areas, where it may be necessary, give reasons for asking your question to help the applicant understand why it is being asked. For example, people with a disability might be asked whether any adjustments to the work place may be necessary in order for them to perform the job;
- v. Check your questions to see if you can ask that exact question of all people. The question should be as relevant to men, women, people of a different race, or people with an impairment. If it can not be asked comfortably to all it needs to be rephrased.



### **C. The conclusion of the interview:**

This part aims at rounding off final details and answering any further queries the applicant might have. Job information and details of conditions of service are also supplied at this point.

- During this stage the applicant is also encouraged to ask questions of the panel. Such questions will allow the applicant to build up a clearer picture of the job, and will also give the panel insight into the applicant's motivation, understanding of the job and interpersonal skills.
- It is also the time when an applicant should be informed of when and how they will hear of the outcome of the interview.
- Check details of nominated referees and ask the applicant if they have any objections to non-nominated referees being contacted.
- Irrespective of performance, **all** applicants should also be asked if they want **post-selection feedback** and thanked for their interest and efforts so far.

During all stages of the interview process, extreme care should be taken to avoid assumptions and stereotyping which can lead to subtle forms of discrimination against individual applicants. It is the responsibility of each panel member to try and be conscious of how personal attitudes and values are affecting their response to individual applicants. Some examples to avoid are:

- i) the assumption that a person has an inadequate command of English or Samoan;
- ii) assumptions about the impact of marriage and a family on an applicant's ability to do the job;

### **Record of Interview**

It is important to keep an accurate record of the interview to assist with the preparation of the selection report and recommendation to the CEO. Form 4 provides a structured approach for the assessment of each applicant interviewed.

## **4.3 Obtaining Referee Reports**

- a) One of the best indicators of future work performance is current work performance. It is desirable that referee reports be gained for all interviewed applicants, **preferably from the current and most recent supervisors**. The overall aim of seeking referee reports is **to obtain or confirm factual information** about the past work history of an applicant, what was discussed during the interview, and an assessment of his/her suitability for the new job in relation to the selection criteria.
- b) The Chair is responsible for contacting referees. It is preferable that *all* panel members participate in undertaking referee reports to avoid misinterpretation.
- c) The referees should be told that the substance of their comments will be made available to the applicant in the selection report. A referee can be asked to verify factual information such as dates of employment, jobs held, salary and attendance. The referee should be invited to comment on the applicant in relation to each of the selection criteria. Probing of initial responses may help build up a better picture of past and potential work performance, e.g. "One



of the selection criteria requires an ability to negotiate. Can you give specific instances of when X was involved in negotiation and comment on their skill in this area.”

- d) Referee reports should be included as part of the selection report. Prior to finalisation of the selection report, the referee’s report should be read back to the referee for confirmation. This checking process will ensure that comments have not been misquoted or twisted in any way. If an applicant has not nominated his/her current supervisor as a referee, the reason needs to be investigated at interview, as there may be a simple and plausible explanation.
- e) The panel has the right to ask for comments from non-nominated referees, but under the **principles of procedural fairness, the applicant has the right of reply to any negative comments made by non-nominated referees.** Similarly, if an applicant is known to a panel member, and the panel member is a non-nominated referee, negative personal assessments which would clearly influence the panel’s decision should be made known to the applicant so they can respond.
- f) Procedural Fairness has two fundamental principles:
  - (a) A person directly affected by an impending decision must be afforded a fair hearing prior to that decision being made; and
  - (b) The decision maker needs to act without bias in exercising his/her responsibilities.
- g) Where written referee reports have been submitted as part of the selection process, it is essential that oral reports still be sought in order to gain feedback relevant to the selection criteria and to clarify issues which are raised during interview.

## 4.4 Evaluation and Making a Recommendation

### 4.4.1 Evaluation of Applicants

This is probably the most difficult aspect of the selection process. All the facts from the applications, interviews, referee reports and other selection methods need to be assembled and evaluated.

A simple method of arriving at a panel decision on the recommended applicant is as follows:

- Step 1:** Each panel member makes their assessment of *each applicant straight after* the particular interview of that applicant has finished. There needs to be no discussion amongst the panel members of these individual results at this stage. This can come later after all interviews and individual assessments have been completed. At this step **Form 4 – Interview Record for Individual Applicant** should be used.

**Scoring:** Each panel member scores *each applicant* in the following way:

- i) at the conclusion of the interview for the applicant, each panel member then circles the appropriate rating on the scale of 0-9 and places this number in the column headed ‘Score’;
- ii) For each job the weighting has already been decided and agreed by the panel during the pre-interview meeting. This weighting should appear in the column marked ‘Weighting’ on each of the Individual Applicant Assessment form;



- iii) The number in the 'Score' column should be multiplied by the number in the 'weighting' column to arrive at the 'Total Score' for that selection criterion and this number is placed in the 'Total Score' column;
- iv) This process is continued for each of the selection criteria and then the 'Total Scores' for all selection criteria are added up to arrive at a Total Final Score for each of the applicants.

**Step 2:** At the conclusion of the interviews, each panel member should rank each applicant individually. Each panel member then provides their ranking for each applicant and then the Panel should have a discussion and determine the final rank for each applicant for entering in **Form 5 – Selection Outcome Report** by the Chairperson. (**Note: Template 4:** Applicant Ranking Comparison Sheet is available to assist with this.)

If there are any large differences in opinion as to the individual applicant ranking needs to be thoroughly explored by referring back to all information available. Importantly, the intention of this step is not to try to get all panel members ranking *exactly* alike. Rather it is intended only to ensure that the assessments of the panel members are well-reasoned and able to be supported. If there are wide differences in the ranking of an applicant by two panel members, then this presents an opportunity for all panel members to explore the basis for these large differences. Sometimes the difference may just be due to one panel member mishearing or misunderstanding an applicant's response to a particular question. So it is important to make sure that the reasons for the particular rankings are discussed openly and honestly.

**NOTE:**

*(a) Differences in opinion should be seen as a helpful and natural outcome of selection using a panel and should not be seen as a hindrance in decision-making.*

*(b) Panel members should avoid agreeing with the most vocal or forceful panel member.*

**Step 3:** Panel aims to reach a consensus on the suitability and ranking of the applicants.

### **FURTHER NOTES ON EVALUATING APPLICANTS:**

- i. If all essential selection criteria have been met, the applicant is suitable regardless of whether desirable criteria have or have not been met;
- ii. Essential selection criteria are mostly used to decide whether an applicant is suitable or unsuitable while desirable selection criteria helps with the ranking of the applicants.
- iii. If the Selection Panel finds that none of the applicants meet all of the essential criteria then *none* of the applicants can be considered suitable for the vacancy, and no one can be selected. The potential for long-term problems resulting from decisions of convenience outweigh the immediate advantage of having someone in the job;
- iv. As the Selection Panel is not the final decision-maker, it is totally inappropriate to discuss the substance or recommended outcomes of the selection process until after the formal decision has been communicated to the applicants in writing. Many appeals have been lodged by applicants who are understandably upset by rumours on the outcome of a selection process. Such gossip does not inspire individual confidence in the professionalism of the panel or its decisions and amounts to a breach of confidentiality. Applicants should never be told of their ranking against other applicants except for the successful applicant who is obviously ranked number 1.



- v. **If the panel is unable to reach a consensus decision, a minority report should be submitted, setting out the alternative recommendations and the reasons for the differences in opinion.** The minority report is not a dissenting report, but simply provides all sides of the selection story. Minority reports should be seen as a last resort, and in the vast majority of cases careful and systematic discussion of each person's capabilities against the selection criteria will result in a clear assessment and ranking.

#### **4.4.2 Writing Selection Reports**

The purpose of the selection report is to provide adequate information to enable the selection decision to be made by the CEO. As the report is also the official record of the process used by the panel to reach its recommendations, it is important that it be professional in presentation and is written in an appropriate style of language. A comprehensive report is to be kept in the Ministry and submitted to the Commission upon request. This report is required when an appeal lodged against the appointee by the other applicants.

To expedite this reporting stage, the final form – **Form 5: Selection Outcome Report** – has been provided. This form, as with the other forms, assists by standardising the type of information required by providing set fields for the required data to be entered.

Each panel member should consider the report in relation to the types of questions the CEO should be asking before the recommendation is approved. If satisfied that the report is consistent and accurate, each panel member should sign it as a full and proper record of the selection process. Care must be taken when ranking applicants

**5****Phase III: Post Assessment****5.1 The Selection Decision**

It is the responsibility of CEOs to review the selection process described in the selection report critically before making the final selection decision.

The following questions may assist with analysing the report for internal consistency:

- a) Is comparative assessment consistent with individual assessment?;
- b) Is the order of merit and recommendation consistent with comparative assessment?;
- c) Is individual and comparative assessment consistent with the selection criteria and the definition of merit in the selection process principles?;
- d) Is further evaluation required as a result of the contents of a minority report?;
- e) Are referee's comments and information from the application incorporated in individual assessment reports?; and
- f) Does the panel appear to have abided by the selection process principles?.

If it appears that the report contains inconsistencies, it may be necessary to conduct further investigations to determine the accuracy of the information contained in the report. For example:

- Have referees been correctly quoted?
- Have referees been selectively quoted?
- Where consensus has not been reached, has a minority report been submitted?

**The CEO's Decision**

CEOs will usually accept the recommendation of the selection panel and proceed to appoint or promote that person.

However, there may be times when the CEO will not be prepared to act on the recommendation. In this situation the CEO may:

- chose to send the papers back to the panel for them to further consider the matter and perhaps re-interview the top applicants; or
- choose to re-advertise and start the whole process again (in this situation previous applicants would usually be told they do not need to re-apply); or
- select someone else from the list of eligible applicants, **who in the opinion of the CEO is the most meritorious applicant.**

At the end of the day, it is the CEO who has to make the decision about which applicant has the most merit and it is the CEO who is accountable for that decision. The selection panel is there to assist: it is not the final decision maker.



## 5.2 Offer of Employment

Once the CEO has decided on the applicant to be appointed or promoted the Line Manager and HRC should make an offer of employment to the successful applicant by using the Provisional Appointment Letter (Template 1).

## 5.3 Unsuccessful Applicants Notified and Feedback Session Offered

Following the acceptance of the offer of employment by the successful applicant unsuccessful applicants should be notified by phone and at the same time sending out an Unsuccessful Letter (Template 2). This letter includes the offer of post selection feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

Post-selection feedback is an integral part of effective selection processes and should be provided after the official selection decision has been made and accepted. Research in other public sectors shows that, apart from fairness, post-selection feedback can significantly reduce the number of appeals and can assist individuals in planning their career and future development.

Feedback should only be conducted by a member or members of the Selection Panel because they are in the best position to explain how the person presented themselves during the process, and to suggest avenues for development. Where possible, it is preferable that at least two (2) members of the Selection Panel are involved in providing feedback.

A sensitive approach to the feelings of the people concerned is necessary. Comparisons between an individual and other applicants must be avoided. However, in cases where an applicant was suitable but not recommended for promotion, it may be desirable to explain why another applicant was selected. The focus of the feedback should be on how the individual presented themselves *in relation to the selection criteria*. For career planning purposes it is essential that individuals have *honest* feedback on both strengths *and* weaknesses.

## 5.4 Provisional Appointment Notified in PSOC

Once the successful applicant has accepted the position and the unsuccessful applicants have been notified via telephone and their letters sent the HRC should notify the Commission so the provisional appointment notice can be included in the next available PSOC.

It should be indicated that if an appeal is to be lodged it should be done within 14 days of the notice appearing in the PSOC.



## 6 Post-Selection

### 6.1 Confirmation of Provisional Appointment

If no appeal has been lodged within the allotted 14 days the provisional appointment can be confirmed and notified in the PSOC accordingly.

The Ministry is able to send a Confirmation Letter (Template 3) to the successful applicant stating their effective date of commencement (which must be after it is confirmed in the PSOC).

### 6.2 Commencement and Induction

The HRC and Line Manager should have completed the appropriate documentation and provided it to the Commission and Ministry of Finance.

#### *Personnel Files*

On appointment the following documents should be provided to the Commission to be stored on the relevant employees personnel file:

1. a birth certificate (or other documentary evidence noting age and place of birth);
2. a certificate of educational qualifications or attainment; and
3. any further information that the Commission requires.

### 6.3 Induction

This is a critical step in the recruitment and selection process and is often overlooked. It is when a 'new' employee receives adequate information and training so they are able to perform in their new role efficiently and productively in as short a time as possible. Socialisation into the new work environment is another important aspect of induction. The timeframe for an induction process should be determined on the individual requirements of the new employee. Induction programs should be provided to all new employees whether they are graduates or an employee who has been promoted or transferred.

The aims of an induction program are to:

- Introduce the employee to the organization and confirm the conditions of their employment including the Code of Conduct;
- Outline the requirements and objectives of the role to ensure the new employee has a clear understanding of what is required;
- Determine what if any training is required by the new employee;
- Establish a positive attitude by the employee towards the Ministry and work group encouraging early commitment; and
- Retention of the new employee.

It is the responsibility of the Ministry (Line Manager and HRC) to conduct induction programs.



## **Forms and Templates**

- Form 1 – Request to Fill and Advertise a Vacancy**
  - Form 2 – Job Application Form**
  - Form 3 – Shortlist of Individual Applicant Form**
  - Form 4 – Interview Record for Individual Applicant Form**
  - Form 5 – Selection Outcome Report**
  - Recruitment and Selection Checklist**
  - Template 1 – Provisional Appointment Letter**
  - Template 2 – Unsuccessful Letter**
  - Template 3 – Confirmation Letter**
  - Template 4 – Applicant Ranking Comparison Sheet**
- Before you apply**

## Recruitment and Selection Checklist

### **Phase I: Pre-assessment**

Task	Responsibility	Completed
Vacancy Review	Line Manager	
Formulating Selection Criteria	Line Manager	
Advertising the Vacancy (Form 1)	Line Manager and the Commission	
The Selection Panel	HRC	

### **Phase II: Assessment**

Task	Responsibility	Completed
Short listing Applicants (Form 3)	Selection Panel	
Informing Applicants of short listing outcome	HRC	
Preparing interview questions	Selection Panel	
Conducting the Interview (Form 4)	Selection Panel	
Obtaining Referee Reports	Selection Panel	
Evaluation of applicants and making a Recommendation (Form 5)	Selection Panel	

### **Phase III: Post Assessment**

Task	Responsibility	Completed
Selection Decision	CEO	
Offer of Employment (Template 1)	Line Manager and HRC	
Unsuccessful Applicants Notified and Feedback Sessions Offered (Template 2)	HRC and Selection Panel	
Provisional Appointment notified in PSOC	HRC and the Commission	

### **Post Selection**

Task	Responsibility	Completed
Confirmation of Provisional Appointment	The Commission	
Commencement and Induction (Template 3)	HRC	

# Template 1 - Provisional Appointment Letter

INSERT MINISTRY LETTERHEAD

Date

**Name and Address of Appointee**

Dear **Name of Appointee**

I am pleased to inform you that your application for the position of *ABC*, in the **Insert Ministry Name** has been successful. As with all recruitment and selection processes this appointment remains provisional until such time that it is confirmed in the Public Service Official Circular. You will receive a second letter from me stating your effective date of commencement.

Your appointment to **Ministry Name** will be subject to the terms set out in Appendix 1 - Details of Appointment. There are two copies of this Appendix, the original and a duplicate, once you have read the contents of this letter and agree with the terms as they are set out please sign the final page of the Appendix and return the Appendix to **Name of HRC, Ministry by close of business on the insert date (allow 2-5 working days)**. When you sign and return Appendix 1 – Details of Appointment you are indicating your acceptance of the position. The duplicate is for your own records.

When you return the copy of the signed Details of Appointment (Appendix 1) you should bring copies of the following documentation:

- Certified copy of your qualifications
- Certified copy of your birth certificate
- **Alter list as required by the Ministry.**

Fa'afetai

Chief Executive Officer  
**Insert Name of Ministry**

## Appendix 1 – Details of Appointment

I, **Name of CEO**, exercising the powers under section 35 of the *Public Service Act 2004*, hereby appoint:

### Full Name of Appointee

to be an officer in the Samoa Public Service in the position of **ABC**, in the **Insert Ministry Name** on the terms and conditions set out in this document.

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### Position Details

1. You are appointed on a **full time or part time** basis. You will be located at **Insert Address**, but may be required to perform your duties at other locations. Your hours of duty will be X per week worked over X days.

### Duties

2. Your duties on commencement are; **lift from Job Description**

- .....
- .....

### Remuneration

3. You will be classified at Salary Level **XYZ**, [which has a range of \$..... to \$..... per annum]. Your salary at the commencement of employment will be at the **[pro rata this if part time role]** rate of **\$XX.XX** per annum.

### Termination

4.2 Your appointment may be terminated:

- (a) by you giving two weeks notice to the **Ministry Name** of resignation or retirement;
- (b) by **Ministry Name** in the event of -
  - (i) misconduct;
  - (ii) poor performance;
  - (iii) your becoming excess to the **Ministry Name** staffing requirements;
  - (iv) retirement.

### Commencement

5. Your appointment will commence on the date stated in the letter you will receive from me confirming your appointment.

### Probation

6. You will be on probation for six (6) months from your date of commencement. The CEO may extend the probation period by an additional three months. Your performance will be reviewed regularly during your probationary period. If your performance is unsatisfactory your appointment may be annulled at any time during probation.

### Obligations to the Samoa Public Service

7. As an officer of the Samoa Public Service your obligations will be-

- (a) to adhere to the Code of Conduct as outlined in Section 19 of the *Public Service Act 2004*
- (b) to adhere to the Values as outlined in Section 17 of the *Public Service Act 2004*;

- (c) to comply with all Ministry governing legislation or internal policies that may exist;
- (d) to comply with all laws which apply to citizens of Samoa;
- (e) to follow and respect reasonable direction of the Chief Executive or of any person to whom administrative responsibility is given by the Chief Executive;
- (f) to comply with the Manual of Instructions on Working Conditions and Entitlements;
- (g) to the best of your ability, to discharge the duties and responsibilities assigned to you with care, diligence, efficiency and impartiality;
- (h) to avoid waste or extravagance in the use of Samoa Public Service resources;
- (i) to adhere to confidentiality requirements of your work and not to use for your personal advantage any information gained in the course of your work;
- (j) not to disclose or share information external to your Ministry without the authority of the Chief Executive Officer.

**Regulating Provisions**

8. Your appointment will be subject to and regulated by:
- (a) the terms and conditions contained in this document;
  - (b) the Manual of Instructions on Working Conditions and Entitlements; and
  - (c) Public Service Act 2004 and other relevant present or future legislation and regulations.

---

**SIGNED:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** ..... /.../... (date)  
**Chief Executive Officer**

**ACCEPTANCE:**

I accept the appointment to the position of *ABC*, in the **Insert Ministry Name** on the terms and conditions contained in this Details of Appointment document.

**SIGNED:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

..... /.../... (date)  
**The Appointee**

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Template 2 - Unsuccessful Letter

INSERT MINISTRY LETTERHEAD

Date

### Name and Address of Applicant

Dear **Name of Applicant**

[USE WHICHEVER VERSION IS APPLICABLE]

#### **Version 1: Not Shortlisted**

Thank you for taking the time to apply for the position of, *ABC*, in our Ministry.

The Selection Panel has considered your application and assessed your claims against each of the selection criteria.

I wish to inform you that you have not been shortlisted for an interview as you did not meet all the essential criteria. In particular you did not meet .....

If you believe that you can provide further evidence to support the above mentioned criteria I recommend that you contact me immediately to address this issue.

Thank you for your interest in this position and I wish you the best of luck with your future endeavours.

#### **Version 2: Unsuccessful in Interview**

Thank you for taking the time to attend the interview for the position of, *ABC*, in our Ministry.

I wish to inform you that at this point in time you have been unsuccessful in obtaining the position.

You have the opportunity to receive feedback from the members of the Selection Panel. If you would like to receive feedback please contact *XYZ* by close of business on the **insert date (Note: maximum 3 working days allowed)**.

#### **Include paragraph below only if unsuccessful applicant is an officer of the Samoa Public Service**

You have the right to appeal to the Public Service Board of Appeal provided you satisfy the requirements in Section 49 of the *Public Service Act 2004*. The Notice of Appeal and Grounds of Appeal must be received by the Public Service Commission within 14 days of the provisional appointment appearing in the Public Service Official Circular.

Thank you for your interest in this position and I wish you the best of luck with your future endeavours.

Fa'afetai

Human Resource Coordinator  
**Insert Name of Ministry**

## Template 3 - Confirmation Letter

INSERT MINISTRY LETTERHEAD

Date

**Name and Address of Appointee**

Dear **Name of Appointee**

I am writing to inform you that your appointment has now been confirmed to the position of, *ABC*, in the **Ministry Name**.

You will commence work at the **Ministry Name, located at Address, on Insert Date\*\*\***. The standard hours of work at the Ministry are 8 am to 12 pm and 1 pm to 4.35 pm, Monday to Friday. However a flexible working hours arrangement exists, this will be explained to you in person by the HRC when you start work. On your commencement you should report to *Insert Name*.

As indicated in the Details of Appointment that you signed you will be on probation for the first six (6) months of your appointment from **insert date** to **insert date** as per Section 40 of the *Public Service Act 2004*.

Congratulations on your appointment. I look forward to welcoming you as a new employee to the **Ministry Name**.

Fa'afetai

Chief Executive Officer  
**Name of Ministry**

**\*\*\* - It is the responsibility of the Ministry to ensure that the effective date of commencement falls after the Confirmation of Appointment appears in the Public Service Official Circular.**

## Template 4 – Applicant Ranking Comparison Sheet

The purpose of this template is to assist Selection Panels in their discussion in determining the top ranked applicant after the conclusion of the interviews. Each member of the Selection Panel should rank the applicants individually using their total scores and enter them into a matrix as demonstrated below. The panel should then use this to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each applicant with the aim of reaching a consensus on who is the top ranked candidate for entering onto the Selection Outcome Report (Form 5).

### Example of Comparison of Applicants

<b>Panel Member</b>	<b>Applicant X Rank</b>	<b>Applicant Y Rank</b>	<b>Applicant Z Rank</b>	<b>Applicant V Rank</b>	<b>Applicant W Rank</b>	<b>Etc..</b>
<b>Line Manager</b>	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>HRC</b>	3	1	2	5	4	
<b>Independent Member</b>	4	3	5	1	2	

# What to do when applying for a job in the Samoa Public Service

## Before you apply

Read the Job Description and Selection Criteria carefully. The Job Description describes the tasks and responsibilities of the role. The Selection Criteria lists any qualifications, abilities and experience that the Selection Committee will be seeking in the successful applicant.

## Preparing your Application

### 1. Job Application Form – Form 2

For an application to be considered by the selection panel all sections of this form **must** be completed. If any information provided on this form is found to be incorrect it may jeopardise your chances of securing the position.

Applicants should ensure that they are providing the most relevant and up to date information pertaining to their qualifications and work experience.

When supplying the names of two referees please ensure that they are able to comment on your past work performance in relation to the job you are applying for, such as past and current supervisors or work colleagues.

It is imperative that all applicants address the selection criteria using examples to demonstrate how they meet the particular criteria. The selection criteria should be addressed using a separate sheet of paper that should be attached to the application form. As a guide the suggested length of response to each criteria should be between one paragraph and one page (in some instances dot points may be appropriate to assist with clarity).

### A Guide to Addressing Selection Criteria

**Answering Selection Criteria:** Selection criteria describe the particular skills, abilities, knowledge and qualifications (if any) required to achieve the outcomes of a position. Applicants are rated against this criteria in order to select the most meritorious applicant.

The following process is a guide to assist you in answering selection criteria:

1. Read the selection criteria carefully
2. Identify the specific factors in each selection criteria
3. Determine how you meet each criteria
  - a. The introductory assertion may be ‘I possess a high level of skill in ....’
  - b. You should then support this statement, such as ‘In my role of .... I have ...’ This is an example of a previous situation where you have demonstrated a particular skill or ability giving consideration to what tasks were involved, or how you would apply the particular skill or ability.
  - c. Expand your previous statement by describing (step by step), what was involved in the process.
  - d. You should then provide support or evidence of achievements, such as ‘the attached statement from ...’, ‘this resulted in ....’, ‘I have improved ...’. These are the results or outcomes of your supporting statement and show how you were successful.
4. Check you have used positive and specific language. Instead of saying ‘We produced a newsletter’, outline specifically what you did, for example, ‘I formatted and edited the newsletter’.
5. Check that you have addressed the specific factors in the selection criteria.
6. Check that you have not undersold or oversold yourself.

### 2. Resume

If you choose to attach your resume it should be as a separate document.