

Working with us at DPHI

A guide for Aboriginal
applicants



About the artwork

The artwork is a visual representation of our journey within and alongside Aboriginal people and communities, creating pathways and being connected to Country. Central to the design are the footprints which have a symbolic meaning, connected to being grounded, we must stay connected to land and our feet are always on Country, no matter where you are in NSW.

Credit: Nikita Ridgeway

Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document may contain images, names or other information about people who have since passed away.

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Working with us at DPHI – A guide for Aboriginal applicants

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This guide aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in NSW understand our agencies employment benefits and to navigate how to apply for a role.

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About our agency

From 1 January 2024, the Department of Planning & Environment has been split to form two departments:

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Building the future of NSW through delivering diverse planning, housing solutions, and infrastructure across the state.

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Ensuring a sustainable NSW through climate change and energy action, water management, environment and heritage conservation and protection.

Check out more about our impact on our website www.dpie.nsw.gov.au



Benefits and working conditions

Some of the many benefits you will have access to:

Hybrid workplace: You'll spend time in the office with your team for connection and collaboration but have the option to work from home if practical.

Flex leave: You can accrue and use up to 24 'flex' leave days on an ongoing basis. This is in addition to the standard 4 weeks of recreational leave.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): EAP is available to our employees and their family members. It supports and empowers employees and their families through free and confidential counselling for both personal and work-related issues.

Fitness Passport: Fitness Passport provides access to 350+ gyms, pools and recreational centres across NSW at discounted rates.

Leadership development: We help develop our emerging and existing leaders at all levels so we can build a pipeline of leaders ready to realise the departments goals and deliver great outcomes.

For those making the leadership journey, we offer workshops, mentoring programs and access to a wide range of external programs and online learning options.

Higher duties and temporary assignments: Transfers, temporary transfers, secondments and acting/shadowing opportunities are a great way to gain experience in a different role. You could also gain experience working with another government agency. We offer these opportunities so you can develop your skills and experience and thrive in areas outside your main role.

Study assistance: We offer a comprehensive study assistance program. We partner with external professional associations that support our employees' professional goals.

Candidate journey



1. Submit application

Submit all required documents on I Work for NSW . You will receive text and email you along the way, so make sure your contact details are correct.

Keep a copy of the role description to help you start preparing for next steps



2. Application reviewed

Once the advertising period closes your application will be reviewed.

Please allow 2 weeks for us to get back to you




3. Interview

We may invite you to an interview (with a panel of up to 3 interviewers).

You will be notified by email and text if we invite you to an interview . You will be asked to select an interview time online. To help you prepare, we'll send a confirmation email with a copy of the role description.


Candidate journey



4. Pre-employment

Candidates are asked to give contact details for 2 professional referees. We may also do other checks such as a working with children check, pre-employment medical test or a criminal background check. This will depend on job applied for.

Some pre-employment checks can take 2 to 4 weeks to process.



5. Offer of employment

Congratulations! The hiring manager will call you to offer the role, give details of the salary and benefits and discuss your start date. We'll send you a letter of offer once you have agreed on the details

Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified. Always ask for feedback to improve next time.



6. Your first day

Your new manager will be in touch to discuss arrangements. Your start date is usually 12 days or more after you accept your employment offer. This allows us to onboard you into our department.

STAR technique

When you get to an interview in the NSW public sector recruitment process, you will be asked capability-based questions, based on the focus capabilities of the role you have applied for.

The interview panel want you to provide past or current work examples that address the focus capability the question is addressing.

The STAR technique is a good tool you can use to structure your past or current work examples before your interview, so you bring your best self to the interview and are able to answer the questions from the panel.

- **Situation:** An event, project or challenge faced.
- **Task:** Your responsibility and tasks for the situation.
- **Action:** Steps taken to address the situation.
- **Result:** Results of the action you took.

STAR technique in practice

Example capability-based question

Tell me about a time you had to develop a skill. How did you know that you had to develop a skill and what was your approach?
Can you tell us what the outcome was?

Situation

I got feedback from my manager about my time management and how long it took me to finish a task.

Task

I needed to develop my time management skills so I could improve my performance.

Action

I learn by doing, I asked to shadow my team leader to build my skills. My team leader taught me how to plan out a work task and helped me with time management skills and tips and advice.

Result

I learnt skills that I didn't use before, and now I know the importance of time management and how it plays a role within my team to get the job done. My manager shared positive feedback on my ability to achieve tasks on time and taking initiative to shadow my team leader.

Cover letter

A cover letter is where you outline your interest in a role.

It is the first impression a Hiring Manager will get and helps them decide if you will go to the next stage for an interview.

Share how you meet the capabilities of the role through examples of your experience.

A good cover letter:

- is brief (usually 1 to 2 pages)
- uses plain English
- is well structured
- is specific to the job you are applying for
- uses specific examples of what you've done and what you've achieved.
- transferable knowledge (theoretical or practical understanding of a subject)
- skills (developed through training, experience, or practice)
- abilities relevant to a job.





Structuring your cover letter

The opening paragraph needs to grab the hiring manager's attention and should clearly outline why you are suitable for the role.

If applying for identified or targeted roles, make sure you share your connection to culture, community and your cultural identity.

Address the letter directly to the hiring manager named on the job advertisement.

Describe why you want to work in the role and show passion for the work

Make clear what you can offer the team and how you can support deliver on their outcomes

Outline any general skills you think are relevant to the role.

Summarise your main skills, capabilities and experience, ensuring you outline how to meet the focus capabilities of the role description.

Use the language that is used in the role description where possible

Provide examples of how you meet the focus capabilities using the STAR technique to support the information/achievements you list on your resume

Finish with a call to action that will encourage the hiring manager to invite you to an interview so you can discuss your suitability for the role further.

Thank the hiring manager for their time, this shows you are excited to interview for the role and supports finish your letter on a positive note.

Transferrable skills

Everybody has different skills and abilities that can be relevant across different areas of life including professionally within the workplace. These are known as 'transferrable skills'.

When answering questions in an interview, it is best to provide an examples of past work experiences to demonstrate how you meet the capabilities to do the role.

However, sometimes we may not have work experience to talk about when going into an interview.

This could be because you are new to the workforce as you might have just finished school, or you have been a full-time carer.

If you don't have work experience to talk to in your interviews, you need to reflect on your transferrable skills.

Examples of transferrable skills

Teamwork

Playing sport in your community

Communication

Networking within your community or in your school or sharing knowledge of Aboriginal culture

Leadership

Being a role model for young Aboriginal people in your community

Listening

Hearing stories and yarning with Elders and family



Resume

Your resume (also known as curriculum vitae or CV) is a summary of your:

- qualifications
- experience
- skills
- qualities.

A resume needs to be up-to-date, clear, concise and well organised. It is best if you can tailor the content to the job you are applying for.

Structuring your resume

Personal details – your name and contact details.

Summary – a brief introduction about you, your work experience, training and interests.

Education – qualifications and relevant training.

Work experience (paid and volunteer) with most recent experience first. Give details on your most recent and relevant work experience and include:

- job title
- employer / organisation / agency
- dates of employment
- your responsibilities
- your achievements.

Other information such as skills, achievements, and relevant memberships.

Referees – name, title and contact details.



Interview questions

The NSW public sector capability framework describes the capabilities (knowledge, skills and abilities) needed to perform a role.

Interview questions will always be based on the Focus capabilities.

When the panel ask questions, they are looking for you to give them a detailed example of a situation where you have demonstrated the required behaviors.

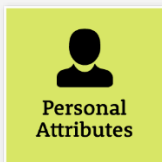
Make sure you describe how you have handled a situation and give enough detail so the panel can assess your response

Don't just say "Yes I'm flexible" you need to share an example of when you have been flexible

In an interview, always be specific! When answering questions, talk about the specific actions you've taken and the outcome.

Use the **STAR** technique to help with this.

This is an example of one focus capability with the indicators the panel will be looking for. These can be found in the role descriptions on the job advertisement



Display Resilience and Courage

Behavioural indicators


Be open and honest, prepared to express your views, and willing to accept and commit to change

Be flexible, show initiative and respond quickly when situations change

Give frank and honest feedback and advice

Listen when ideas are challenged, seek to understand the nature of the comment and respond appropriately

Interview process



NSW Government agencies use behavioural style interviews. When you are asked questions, you will need to share examples of specific situations from your own experience.

This interviewing style is based on the idea that past behaviour is an indicator of future behaviour what skills you bring and knowledge you have.

1. Come prepared!

Get ready for your interview by preparing examples. It is useful to prepare more than one example for each focus capability if possible so that you feel extra prepared and have more than one example to lean on.

2. Make sure your technology works

Test your camera and audio – ring your mob beforehand to make sure your technology is working okay.

3. Be on time!

Make sure you contact the panel if you can't make it on time

4. Try and relax

Speak clearly and breathe. Don't talk fast, it's just a yarn. If you need to hear the question again or for it to be reworted don't be ashamed to ask. It shows that you want to get it right.



Assessments

An additional assessment is chosen to check your suitability for the role. They help us to learn about how you are likely to perform the job. These will be different for each role you apply for. If for any reason you need a modification to this assessment, you can let the Hiring Manager or recruitment contact know.

Examples of assessment tasks you may be given are:

Written assessment

Developing a presentation

Psychological Assessments

Online questionnaire to check your potential and ability to solve work-related problems and learn new job knowledge. They may also gauge how likely you will fit in a job or team and work style preferences.

Case studies

You receive information about a work-related scenario. You will need to read and analyse the information and provide your findings to the panel in writing or a yarn.

Practical task

Demonstrating how you would use a piece of equipment used in the role



Supporting documentation

When applying for identified roles with our agency, applicants are required to provide a Confirmation of Aboriginality stating that you:

- are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent
- identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and
- are accepted as such in the community where you live

You should upload your Confirmation of Aboriginality in your application as supporting documentation. This document is needed before interviews commence.

If you are unable to provide this at the application stage, please get in touch with the hiring manager or the Aboriginal Career Pathways team at dpieapc@dpie.nsw.gov.au after you submit your application.

We have **Aboriginal support networks** and opportunities to connect with other staff from across the state.

There are internal mentoring programs and development programs available for Aboriginal staff.



All our roles are advertised on I work for NSW. You can create a profile on **I Work for NSW.**

Sign up to our newsletter to get fortnightly updates on available roles or want to yarn with the Aboriginal Career Pathways team

