

JOB APPLICATION TOOLKIT

Tips and guidance to support
you in your job application
with the City of Casey



Introduction

The City of Casey welcomes people with different skills and life experiences, and encourages people of all ages, genders, cultures, backgrounds, and abilities, including those with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, LGBTIQ+ communities, multicultural communities, and refugee or migrant backgrounds to apply for our positions.

If you need reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process, please contact our Talent Acquisition team at talent@casey.vic.gov.au or call 03 9709 9633.

We strive for a workforce that reflects the diverse community that we serve and in doing so demonstrate our core values of **Dream Big**, **Empower Each Other** and **Make our Community Proud**.

This toolkit will provide coaching and guidance on the job application process, as well as equipping you with the skills needed to effectively apply for a new role, make a great first impression in your interviews and learn to self-reflect afterwards.

City of Casey job application process:



Topics covered in this toolkit:

- 1 Preparing to apply for a new role
- 2 Reviewing job advertisements
- 3 Write a compelling resume
- 4 Write a great cover letter
- 5 Prepare for your interview
- 6 After the interview



Reviewing the topics above will help you understand the job application process and effectively highlight your skills and abilities when applying for a position at the City of Casey.

1

Preparing to apply for a new role

Self-reflection before beginning your job search

Applying for a new position is a significant decision. Therefore, it is important to consider several things before beginning the job search process.

By reflecting on the questions below, you can save valuable time and energy by only applying for roles that best suit your skills and capabilities but also align with other factors that are important to you within a role, a team, or an organisation.



Motivation

- What are the areas that motivate you the most in your work? Do you prefer to work independently or with others?
- What does a role need to have that would make you satisfied 80% of the time? Remember, it is unlikely that any role is perfect 100% of the time.



Organisation or industry

- Is there a particular type of organisation or industry you would prefer to work in?
- Are there particular areas within Local Government that interest you?



Culture

- Is there a particular type of organisational or team culture that you prefer to work in?
- What does this culture look like for you? What are people doing or not doing in your preferred culture?



Values

- Are there any values that you would like your organisation or team to have?
- How do organisational values align with your personal values?



Location

- Do you have a preferred location? How far are you prepared to travel for a role?
- Is working locally important to you? How many days a week would you prefer to work on-site? Hybrid arrangements are becoming more common among organisations.



Flexibility

- How important is flexibility to you and what does this look like in your work?
- Ensure you are clear on flexibility, as everyone has a different perspective or definition of what a flexible working environment looks like.



Development and career opportunities

- What sort of development or career opportunities are you looking for?
- What would be the impact to you if career progression was limited in this organisation?



Deal breakers

- Is there anything that would prevent you from accepting a position? Consider working hours, location, salary, or culture and your deal breakers.

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Reviewing Job Advertisements

Applying for a new position can often take a lot of time and energy. We recommend you maximise your efforts by only applying for positions that are the best fit for you.

Completing a comprehensive review of the job advertisement and the position description, combined with the reflection activities we recommended above in Topic 1, will support you in aligning your skills and experience to each position.

Key considerations when reviewing a job advertisement:

- Does the role and company align to your career goals and what is important to you?
- Do you have 70-80% of the stated requirements of the role? Be honest when assessing your current skills. If you are unsure, speak to the hiring manager, supervisor or a trusted friend or colleague to help you assess your skills before proceeding with an application for a role.
- Look out for key words. There will be key words in every job advertisement or position description that you will want to identify and include in your resume and cover letter. These key words will also support your interview preparation if you progress to the interview stage.

Most job advertisements will include:



An overview of the company and the role.



A description of the core responsibilities and expectations.



The specific skills, experience and qualifications required.



The benefits and opportunities available to the successful candidate.



Always review the job advertisement and position description in detail before applying for a role.

If you have completed self-reflection as recommended in Topic 1, you will easily be able to identify a role that meets your values and career aspirations from the job advertisement or position description.

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Write a compelling resume

A resume is used to showcase your skills and experience to a hiring manager who will determine if your application is suitable to progress to the next stage.

What to include in your resume:



Contact details

- ✓ Always include your primary contact phone number and email address.



Work history

- ✓ Ensure your most current role is the first one listed.
- ✓ Include: the name of the organisation, your role title, the dates that you held each role and key responsibilities of each role.
- ✓ Key Achievements are optional, but it is a good idea to include at least 1 for each role you have listed.



Skills, qualifications and experience

- ✓ Include details about your key skills and strengths. You could also include these in the career objective or summary section.
- ✓ Include any qualifications or education that are relevant or are a requirement of the role you are applying for, such as a Working with Children's Check or a Food Safety Certificate.



Refer to key criteria

- ✓ Use key words from the job advertisement to refer to key criteria.
- ✓ To tailor your resume to the position, provide detail about your skills and experience that best align to the role. Limit or exclude details about your skills and experience that are not critical to the role.



Career objective or summary

- ✓ Include a career objective or career summary at the top of the page.
- ✓ This only needs to be a short paragraph of 1-2 sentences.
- ✓ Highlight why you are applying for this position and how it aligns with your work preferences or career aspirations.



Use bullet points and white space

- ✓ A well-formatted resume is almost as important as the content. It makes it easier for your reader to scan and gather the information they need from your application.
- ✓ Include lots of white space by writing short paragraphs and using line spacing.
- ✓ Use bullet points to create more white space and make your information look more succinct.



References available on request

- ✓ Include a statement that you can provide your references upon request. They are not generally required until after the interview stage.



[Click here to review a sample resume or navigate to the resources section on the recruitment page for an example of how all of these areas are incorporated.](#)

What to leave out of your resume:



Lengthy resumes

- × It is best to keep your resume to a maximum of 2-3 pages.
- × You can achieve this by choosing to include only details that are relevant to the role you are applying for.
- × If your resume is too long, your more relevant skills and experience may not be noticeable and could be missed among less relevant information.
- × For privacy reasons, do not include details about your referees unless requested.



Positions held more than 15 years ago

- × Exclude information about positions you held more than 15 years ago. However, this is a guide rather than a rule. It will depend on your unique career history and role you are applying for.
- × If you have only had 1 or 2 roles in the last 15 years, you may prefer to include earlier roles as part of your work history.
- × If you feel uncomfortable about leaving out part of your career history from your resume, you could include a career summary at the end as an alternative.



Fancy fonts, colours or underline

- × Avoid using fancy fonts, any colours, underlines, or other advanced formatting.
- × They can end up being distracting, making your resume more difficult for the reader to find the information they need.



Unexplained gaps

- × Hiring managers acknowledge there are many reasons you may have been unemployed for an extended period. You may have been caring for children, enjoying an extended holiday, taking leave, undertaking formal study or supporting a family member through illness.
- × It is helpful to explain extended job gaps rather than leaving these for a hiring manager to make assumptions that could be incorrect.
- × If you were unemployed while looking for work, it is more appropriate to explain this in your resume rather than to leave a gap and hope it goes unnoticed.

Optional extras for your resume:



List of 3 key strengths or professional skills.



Your career summary on the first page.



Professional memberships & development



Interests or other appropriate non-job-related information about you.

Apply your own judgement on whether it would be beneficial to include one or more of these items in your resume. Base your decision on the role you are applying for and your level of experience and qualifications. These will have little or no impact on your suitability for a role but can help to personalise your resume.



Always proofread thoroughly before submitting

Ensure your resume is free from spelling or grammatical errors. Do not rely solely on your computer's spell check function. Instead, ask a family member or a friend to help look over your resume for you.

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Write a great cover letter

The purpose of a cover letter

A cover letter is more personable than your resume and can reveal more of your personal attributes. It highlights your motivation, key skills, qualifications and how they are a match to the role. It also provides a hint of what is ahead in your resume, encouraging the hiring manager to read further.



What to include in your cover letter:

- 1** Indicate the position you are applying for.
- 2** Describe your motivation in applying for the position.
- 3** Summarise your experience, your values and suitability for the position.
- 4** Include your availability for an interview or further discussion.
- 5** An effective cover letter is simple and succinct. Do not include unnecessary information or complicated language.
- 6** Ensure your cover letter is no more than 1 page in length.

Reminders:

Always proofread your cover letter for spelling or grammatical errors. Remember to write in a formal style and organise your letter into paragraphs. You may also ask a friend or family member to review your cover letter for you.



[Click here to review a sample cover letter or navigate to the resources section on the recruitment page for an example of how a cover letter is written](#)

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Prepare for your interview

The purpose of an interview

The purpose of an interview is to support the hiring manager and other panel members to understand your skills, qualifications and experience in greater detail. The information you share will help them make an assessment on how suitable you are for the role and the team.

At the City of Casey, the Talent Acquisition Team partners with hiring managers to make sure our processes for recruitment are followed consistently. These processes are designed to ensure our recruitment is conducted in a fair and equitable way.

The interview offers you an opportunity to learn more about the role and the team that you would be working in. It can help you determine if the role aligns with your career aspirations and personal values.

Recommended interview preparation

Careful interview preparation is a crucial step in the interview process. The following are recommended as tools to help you prepare for an upcoming interview.



Research

- Ensure you research the company's:
 - ✓ History
 - ✓ Vision & values
 - ✓ Company's recent achievements
 - ✓ Future direction or aspirations
 - ✓ Social media pages, websites & LinkedIn



Review

- Review the job advertisement and requirements.
 - ✓ Being clear on these will help you prepare your responses to specific interview questions.



Respond

- Prepare & practice responses to a variety of questions including:
 - ✓ Career history
 - ✓ Motivation
 - ✓ Skills
 - ✓ Experience
 - ✓ Achievements
 - ✓ Character



Questions

- Prepare questions relating to:
 - ✓ The team
 - ✓ The role
 - ✓ The culture
 - ✓ Future prospects
 - ✓ Key challenges

Interview structure at the City of Casey:



Sample interview questions:



Motivational

"What's your understanding of the role and why are you interested?"



Skills-based

"Talk us through your professional and technical skill-set."



Situational

"How would you deal with a colleague with whom you seem unable to build a successful working relationship?"



Behavioural

"Tell me about a time your priorities and goals changed. What were they and how did you ensure you were successful?"

S.T.A.R. responses to behavioural interview questions

When responding to a behavioral interview question, the interview panel may ask you to use the **S.T.A.R.** format to ensure you provide a complete and detailed answer/example.



Situation

What was the **situation** and the context?



Task

What was the **task** you needed to do?



Action

What was the **action** you took to resolve the issue, problem or address the situation?



Result

What was the **result** or outcome of your actions?

How to prepare your responses to behavioural questions:

- ★ Identify the **key skills and requirements** of the role using the job advertisement or position description. For example, customer service, communication, teamwork.
- ★ Reflect on **specific situations when you have demonstrated** these key skills and strengths in your current role or previous roles.
- ★ Write down your examples in the **S.T.A.R. format**.
- ★ **Rehearse** your responses aloud using your examples.

Tips for managing nerves



Nerves are OK

- ✓ The interview panel recognise that nerves are common and expected.
- ✓ They will do what they can to help you to feel at ease throughout the interview.



Interviews are a conversation

- ✓ Remember, an interview is a conversation. It is to help the interview panel understand more about your skills and experience.
- ✓ While you may be quite nervous to begin with, you will likely find your nerves will settle after a short period of time.



Preparation

- ✓ Quality preparation time will help you feel capable and confident to respond to questions you are likely to be asked.
- ✓ Preparation includes **Research, Review, Responses & Questions** as discussed above.



Practice

- ✓ Practice or rehearse your responses several times out loud to yourself or a trusted colleague. This will help your responses feel familiar and become succinct when answering in an interview.

Virtual interview tips

In today's environment, it is becoming increasingly common to attend a virtual interview rather than an in-person interview. With this in mind, it is important to consider and prepare for the different elements that are unique to virtual interviews.

Here is a checklist of considerations and tips to have a more professional and positive virtual interview experience.



Test your technology and connection prior to the interview



Login 5-10 minutes early



Dress professionally



Choose a location free of noise and distractions



Consider your backdrop and ensure good lighting



Prepare to respond to potential technical issues



Prepare notes



Have a glass of water nearby

General interview tips



Interview consistency

- ✓ All of your interviews should be treated with the same level of care and attention, regardless of if it is a virtual or face-to-face interview.



Professional interview etiquette

- ✓ Your level of professionalism and interview etiquette plays a role in your success in an interview.
- ✓ Make sure you know the location of your interview and give yourself plenty of time to



Ask questions

- ✓ Ensure you have prepared at least 1-2 questions you can ask the interview panel. These can include: "What are the key challenges of the role?" "How would you describe the team culture?" or "What training and support will I be provided with?"
- ✓ Open-ended questions are ideal.



Showcase your personality

- ✓ While the interview is a formal and professional process, we encourage you to allow your personality to come through.
- ✓ After your initial nerves subside, try to relax and let the interview panel see the unique style and contribution that you could bring to their team.

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After the interview

Actions to take after your interview

Waiting to hear back about the outcome of your interview can be challenging. Below are recommended actions you could take after your interview. Make your own judgement about how beneficial and effective these actions would be for you.

Reflect on your interview performance



- ✓ Reflect on what went well, not so well and what you might do differently next time. You can record these reflections for future interviews, particularly if you are undergoing multiple interviews.
- ✓ Even if you are the successful candidate, this is a valuable reflection opportunity for your professional development.

Send the hiring manager a thank you email, or let them know if the role is not right for you



- ✓ It can be helpful to send a follow up email to the hiring manager to thank them for the interview opportunity and let them know you are still interested in the role.
- ✓ You could comment on any highlights from your interview such as: *"It sounds like a very exciting opportunity that I would love to be a part of"* or *"I really liked the sound of the team culture and I'm excited about the potential of being a member of your team."* These are just examples, so only make comments that are authentic to you.
- ✓ Alternatively, if you do not feel this is the right role for you, it is best to contact the hiring manager to thank them and let them know that after careful consideration, you do not feel this role is the right fit for you.

Apply a flexible mindset



- ✓ There are many reasons why an interview outcome may be delayed. It is good to adopt a flexible mindset on when you can expect to be contacted. However, the hiring manager should inform you if they anticipate a delay in sharing the interview outcome with you.
- ✓ If you have not heard back about the outcome of your interview by the date you were advised, send a brief follow-up email asking when you can anticipate an outcome.

Disappointment is natural

If you spent considerable time and attention preparing for your interview, it is understandable that you might feel disappointed if you were not selected as the successful candidate.

There are many factors that hiring managers and the interview panel need to consider when selecting the preferred candidate for a role. Being unsuccessful does not necessarily mean you performed poorly in your interview.

Feedback is a valuable learning opportunity

You have a valuable opportunity to receive feedback about your interview that could help you to improve in future interviews. If feedback is not offered, we recommend you contact the hiring manager. You could address this by saying *"I'd appreciate the opportunity to get some feedback on my interview so I can improve for next time."*



Here are some tips on asking for and receiving **feedback**:

Timing

- ☆ Make sure the **timing** is appropriate for you to receive feedback. For instance, you may not be in the best frame of mind to hear immediate feedback after you have been told you were unsuccessful.
- ☆ It is OK to ask the hiring manager to schedule a time when you are more likely to be receptive to feedback. You could ask: *"I am really keen to receive feedback about my interview, can we schedule a time next week to discuss this?"*

Active listening

- ☆ Use **active listening** and maintain a **curious mindset** as you receive feedback.
- ☆ Ask **questions** to get more details if you are unsure. **Paraphrase** to make sure you have understood the feedback.
- ☆ Active listening is critical to using feedback to help you **grow**.

Resist defending

- ☆ It can be easy to feel you need to defend your interview performance or response to feedback you receive. However, it is more productive for you to make sure you **understand** the feedback rather than be defensive. Your **curious mindset** and **active listening skills** will help you to avoid this.

Thank the hiring manager

- ☆ **Thank** the hiring manager for sharing their feedback with you.
- ☆ While hearing constructive feedback can be challenging, it can also be difficult for a hiring manager to share this type of feedback.

Take time to reflect

- ☆ Take time to **reflect** on the feedback you have received.
- ☆ It is often in hindsight together with constructive feedback that we can acknowledge perhaps the role was not right for you at the time.

It may not be your performance

- ☆ Sometimes, being unsuccessful **does not** mean you did not perform well in your interview. It might just be that there was an exceptional candidate who was considered the most appropriate out a pool of several other great candidates.



Below are some questions you could ask during a conversation about feedback:

"Can you tell me what I did well in the interview?"

"Can you tell me if there were any areas I didn't do so well during the interview?"

"Can you tell me what I could do differently next time?"

We trust this training series has been a valuable resource to support you through the job application process here at the City of Casey.

We wish you all the very best with your future job search, applications and interviews.

‘Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.’

Contact the City of Casey:

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