

Tips for applying to federal government jobs

submitted by Craig Abbott, Service Canada Labour Market Analyst

While many people know where to look for federal government job opportunities open to the public (www.jobs.gc.ca), many don't realize the importance of applying properly.

It is not as simple as just uploading a basic resumé that you use for every job advertised. If you want to make sure you get screened into the competition, you need to adjust and update your resumé and cover letter each time you apply to a different job.

With this type of application process, don't worry about keeping your resumé to two pages and your cover letter to one page. Make them as long as they need to be to show how you meet the qualifications listed in the job advertisement.



Craig Abbott

Here are a few more tips to help you apply for a job with the federal government:

Statement of Merit Criteria

The most important part of the actual job ad is the **Statement of Merit Criteria**. This lists what the department or agency is looking for in a potential employee. It includes **essential qualifications** and **asset qualifications**. Essential qualifications are qualities that are needed to do the job while asset qualifications are qualities that may not be necessary for the job but would benefit the organization doing the hiring.

Meet all of the essential qualifications

In order to get screened into the actual competition, you must demonstrate how you meet *all* of the essential qualifications.

The best way to do this is to create a cover letter and make headings for each of the qualifications. Under each heading, fully explain how you have that qualification. **Mention the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How** to show how your experience meets the qualifications listed.

For example:

Who did you work for?
What were you doing?
Where and when did you work?

How does your experience relate to the qualifications in the job ad?

It is not enough to just say you have experience. Never assume that someone will read between the lines. If you have a particular qualification, you should state it or you may be screened out. Whatever you mention in your cover letter should also be backed up by what is in your resumé.

Listing asset qualifications

You should also list how you meet any of the asset qualifications listed on the Statement of Merit Criteria. Asset qualifications are an additional qualification that managers may decide to screen or select on. You may not need these qualifications to do the job, but if you have them, explain how you meet them.

Bilingual competitions

For bilingual competitions, if you are not sure you have the proper language levels, apply anyway. You have the right to be tested and if nothing else comes out of it, you will at least get to complete language testing and find out what level of French or English you have.

Format your application properly

Many applications are done on-line today. When applying for a position on-line, bullets and indentations in your resumé may not appear the same using the on-line application. Make sure your application is formatted properly before submitting it.

References

When including references in your application, make sure you let them know you are applying and make sure they will give you a good reference. A bad reference can cost you the job.

Getting through the first screening process

For those who get screened into the initial competition, the work doesn't end there. In fact, it is only just beginning! Start researching the organization that put out the advertisement. Look at their website and check out any publications that are available, including

promotional material. Try to find out as much as you can about the department or agency. You may get asked questions like what is the mandate or mission statement of the organization. So be prepared.

Testing

The first step in the competition could be doing some kind of test. The Public Service Commission has a number of practice tests available on their website. Take a look at their website www.psc-cfp.gc.ca to find out if one is available.

The interview

Next up could be an assessment board. This is usually a group of three or more people who will interview the candidates. While it may seem difficult to prepare for this, all of the information you need to know is listed in the Statement of Merit Criteria. Look at the abilities and suitability areas of the Statement of Merit Criteria and try to think of questions that may be asked related to this. The extra work you do to research the department or agency will prove valuable as well.

Informal discussion

If you are not successful in the job, don't let the process end there. Arrange to have an "informal discussion." This is a discussion you can have that allows you to find out why you were screened out of a competition. It is an excellent opportunity to find out specifics about your performance and it is a great learning experience for future competitions.

These are just a few tips to help you prepare to apply to a federal government job opportunity.

Good luck with your job search!



For more tips about the interview process, assessment tools used, and what to do before, during and after the interview, feel free to contact me at 432-6850 or e-mail craig.abbott@servicecanada.gc.ca

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Publication Manager/Sponsor: Gloria Welton
Queens County Reporter/Copy Editor: Heidi Riley
Kings County Reporter: Stella Shepard
Prince County Reporter: Patricia Roy
Researcher/Reporter: Stacy Dunn
Design/Pre-press/Webmaster: Graphic Communications

The Employment Journey
Box 8816, Yorkdale Estates, PE C0A 1P0
Telephone: **Charlottetown** (902) 894-4100
Montague (902) 838-4106
Facsimile: **Charlottetown** (902) 368-4548
Montague (902) 838-3518
E-Mail: employ@pei.aibn.com

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