



Office of the
Merit Commissioner

2019/20

Merit Performance Audit Report

UPHOLDING FAIR HIRING IN THE
BC PUBLIC SERVICE

December 2020



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Executive Summary

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020, a total of 7,751 appointments were made to and within the BC Public Service. Of these, the Office of the Merit Commissioner audited 267 randomly-selected appointments.

In accordance with the *Public Service Act*, the purpose of each audit was to determine:

- whether the recruitment and selection process was both properly designed and applied to result in an appointment based on merit; and,
- whether the individual appointed was qualified (i.e., had the qualifications specified as required for the position).

In addition, each audit determined whether there was sufficient and appropriate documentation to support the hiring decision.

The overall process findings, which can be extrapolated to all appointments of a similar type made throughout the BC Public Service in the 2019/20 fiscal year, showed that:

- 57 percent of appointments were found to be “merit”;
- 37 percent of appointments were found to be “merit with exception”; and,
- 6 percent of appointments were found to be “merit not applied”.

The recruitment and selection process findings were consistent with the 56 percent merit findings in 2018/19, and a positive indicator that the estimated number of appointments found to be “merit” has increased, then remained steady, from the previous two fiscal years where it was 43 percent.

Findings concerning the qualifications of the individual appointed continue to be excellent. In nearly all cases, the individuals whose appointments were selected for audit had the qualifications specified as required for the position. In two appointments, the individual did not possess a mandatory requirement or did not achieve the mark required to pass an assessment. In another three appointments, there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the individual met the past work performance requirements.

The state of documentation also continues to be good with 84 percent of the appointments determined to have sufficient or better supporting evidence. This finding was 80 percent last year, up significantly from the previous years where it was close to 60 percent.

While these are generally positive findings, the audit observed 176 errors in over 40 percent of the hiring processes; therefore, there continue to be opportunities to improve recruitment and selection processes.



The audit considers hiring processes through six distinct categories: the overall approach and the five standard stages of short-listing, interviewing and testing, past work performance, years of continuous service and notification. The categories where errors most commonly occurred were short-listing with interviewing and testing a close second. While the number of errors in all categories has fluctuated somewhat from the 2018/19 Merit Performance Audit, appointments with errors in the approach category had the largest decrease whereas interviewing and testing had the largest increase.

In reviewing findings through the principles that support merit-based hiring, the majority of competitions had open and transparent processes, and generally used objective, relevant methods to assess applicants. The areas of greatest risk may be attributed to expedient or perfunctory methods of assessment, and decisions or simple mistakes that impact the equitable treatment of applicants. Of note:

- The short-listing category had the greatest number of appointments with errors, mostly due to decisions to change, lower or waive mandatory qualifications or requirements.
- The most frequent error across categories involved assessment tools and standards, specifically, a lack of substantive marking criteria and an over-reliance on generic marking scales. There were also errors where tools and standards existed but were either incorrectly used or not applied.
- The errors with the most serious impacts arose from judgement and administrative mistakes.

Based on the findings, there are three recommendations for deputy ministers and organization heads for their delegated hiring managers.

1. As was recommended in the 2018/19 audit, review education and experience qualifications prior to posting to accurately identify which are mandatory and which are preferred, and state where alternatives may be acceptable.
2. Establish and properly use assessment standards and tools (e.g. apply short-listing criteria; and identify and apply marking criteria) which are appropriate for the specific hiring process.
3. Verify the accuracy of candidate standing at each stage of the process prior to progressing to the next stage.



Audit Overview

Section 8 of the *Public Service Act* (the *Act*) states that all appointments to and from within the public service must be based on the principle of merit and, according to section 5(1) of the *Act*, the Merit Commissioner is responsible for monitoring the application of the merit principle through random audits of appointments. To this end, the Office of the Merit Commissioner (the Office) conducts yearly merit performance audits.

The merit principle commonly means that appointments are made on the basis of competence and ability to do the job, and are non-partisan.

Scope

The merit performance audit focuses on those appointments that form the long-term workforce of the BC Public Service. These are permanent appointments and temporary appointments that exceed seven months in ministries and other organizations (e.g., boards, commissions, and agencies) whose employees are hired in accordance with section 8 of the *Act*. Appendix A lists these ministries and organizations.

For the 2019/20 Merit Performance Audit, the Office collected quarterly lists of permanent appointments and temporary appointments exceeding seven months made in the organizations listed in Appendix A. A total of 7,751 appointments were identified from April 1, 2019 through March 31, 2020.

Sample

For the results of the audit to be generalizable to all 7,751 appointments, a simple random sample of appointments was selected each quarter based on a pre-determined sample size. Of the total sample of 280 appointments selected, 13 were determined to be out-of-scope, resulting in 267 appointments subject to audit. For more detail on the sampling methods used, see the *2019/20 Report on the Sampling Methodology and Extrapolations for the Merit Performance Audit* posted on the Office's website.

Methodology and Criteria

A modified approach to the collection of documentation was undertaken for the final quarter this year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as the Merit Commissioner recognized that hiring managers could be working remotely and unable to access the competition documentation or, could have additional responsibilities connected to the pandemic which would make it challenging to participate in



the audit. Therefore, the timeframe to provide information was flexible, rather than fixed. Hiring managers for twelve of the seventy sampled appointments required additional time to submit the competition documentation; however, all the materials were received in time to meet an amended end of year final reporting.

Using the Office's established audit program, audits were conducted to assess whether:

- recruitment and selection processes were both properly designed and applied to result in appointments based on merit; and,
- the individuals, when appointed, possessed the required qualifications for the positions to which they were appointed.

With respect to the recruitment and selection process, auditors reviewed the documentation of each appointment for an open and transparent process, objective and relevant means of assessment, reasonable decisions, and equitable treatment of applicants. Specifically, the overall approach and the stages of each hiring process were examined to determine if they were designed and applied in accordance with the requirements of the *Act*, relevant policy, and provisions of collective agreements. The five common stages of a competition are short-listing, interviewing and testing, past work performance, years of continuous service, and notification. In addition to auditing individual appointments, auditors also examined the establishment of any relevant inventories.

Section 8(2) of the *Act* sets out the matters to be considered in determining merit, which must include education, experience, skills, knowledge, past work performance, and years of continuous service.

With respect to the individuals appointed, auditors examined whether the appointees met the education and experience specified as required for the position at the time of their appointment, as well as the minimum criteria established for the other factors assessed during the process. Further, auditors considered whether there was sufficient and appropriate documentation on file to support the hiring decision.

Based on the established criteria, each audit resulted in two findings: the recruitment and selection process finding, and the qualifications of the individual appointed finding. As well, each audit had a determination on the quality of documentation. The findings and determination are described in the following tables.



Table 1 Recruitment and Selection Process

Criteria	Finding
The recruitment and selection process was both properly designed and applied to result in an appointment based on merit.	Merit
The recruitment and selection process contained one or more errors in design or application: there was no identifiable negative impact on the outcome.	Merit with exception (MWE)
The recruitment and selection process contained one or more errors in design or application: the impact on the outcome was known to be negative and as a result, the appointment was not based on merit. This finding is also made if there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the design or application of a process was based on merit.	Merit not applied (MNA)

Table 2 Individual Appointed

Criteria	Finding
The individual, when appointed, possessed the qualifications specified as required for the position.	Qualified
The individual, when appointed, did not possess the qualifications specified as required for the position.	Not qualified
There was insufficient evidence provided to demonstrate that the individual, when appointed, possessed the qualifications specified as required for the position.	Qualifications not demonstrated

Table 3 Documentation

Criteria	Finding
The hiring process was comprehensively documented with minimal or no follow-up required.	Good
The hiring process was partially documented. Some documents were missing or incomplete and/or some aspects of the process required clarification. There was sufficient information to conduct the audit.	Sufficient
The hiring process was insufficiently documented. Key aspects of the process were not documented and/or verbal evidence was required to complete the audit.	Insufficient



The audit also identified “notes for improvement” for any aspects that were not of consequence to the overall merit of the process, but had implications related to transparency, or had the potential to introduce an error into the process if not addressed.

Reporting

The overall results of the audits are reported to the Legislative Assembly and publicly reported through the Office’s website. Deputy ministers and organization heads were provided with their detailed individual audit reports in order that they may take any necessary action to improve hiring practices within their organizations and share findings with the hiring managers to whom the responsibility to recruit, assess and select individuals for appointments has been delegated.

Audit results were also reported to the Deputy Minister of the BC Public Service Agency (Agency Head) who is responsible for staffing policy, support and training in the BC Public Service.

2019/20 Audit Results

Recruitment and Selection Process Results

Of the 267 appointments audited in the 2019/20 Merit Performance Audit, 154 were found to be the result of a merit-based recruitment and selection process with no errors. Another 98 appointments were found to be “merit with exception”, indicating that while there were design or application errors in the hiring process, there were no known negative impacts on the outcome. In 15 appointments, errors were found that had negative impacts on the outcome, resulting in “merit not applied” findings. There are two appendices to this report that provide an in-depth analysis related to the recruitment and selection process results: Appendix B contains detailed observations of errors identified in the recruitment and selection process and Appendix C contains detailed observations regarding the audited inventory processes.

Table 4 shows the audit results extrapolated from the sample of audited appointments to the total population of the same types of appointments (i.e., permanent appointments and temporary appointments exceeding seven months) made from April 1, 2019, through March 31, 2020 (within specified margins of error). Further details can be found in the *2019/20 Report on the Sampling Methodology and Extrapolations for the Merit Performance Audit* posted on the Office’s website.



Table 4 Overall Results – Recruitment and Selection Process

Overall findings	Appointments audited		Extrapolated results – Estimated population
Merit	154	57% ¹	4,232
Merit with exception	98	37%	2,760
Merit not applied	15	6%	421
Total	267	100%	7,413²

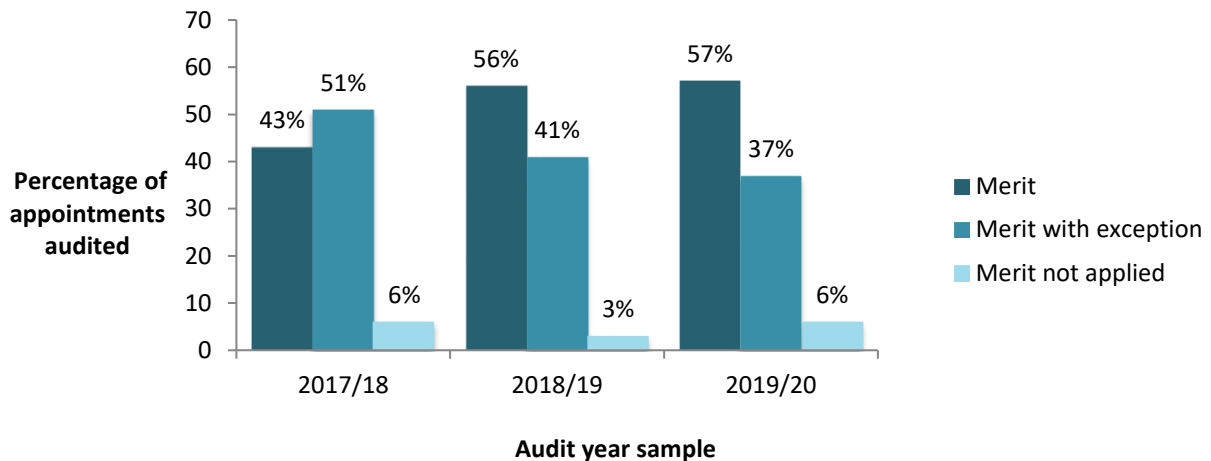
Note:

1: This value is actually 57.7 percent in the sample and should be rounded up to 58 percent. However, for these percentages to sum to 100 percent this value was rounded down to 57 percent to more closely approximate the extrapolated values for which details are available in the *2019/20 Report on the Sampling Methodology and Extrapolations for the Merit Performance Audit*.

2: Estimated population size adjusted for out-of-scope appointments.

Chart 1 illustrates the frequency of findings in the samples of appointments audited since 2017/18.

Chart 1 Frequency of Findings in Audited Appointments – Recruitment and Selection Process



The proportion of appointments with “merit not applied” findings has shown a small variation from six percent in 2017/18, to three percent of audited appointments in 2018/19, and back to six percent in 2019/20. The “merit with exception” findings decreased last year from 51 percent to 41 percent and again this year to 37 percent and the merit findings showed a corresponding increase over this timeframe.



For 2019/20, the relative proportion of findings with no errors was over 50 percent for the second time since 2014/15.

Appointments with Errors

As indicated, 98 of the audited appointments resulted in a “merit with exception” finding and another 15 resulted in a “merit not applied” finding. This means that in aggregate, the audit found that 113 appointments had errors in their recruitment and selection process. The errors are identified and reported out in accordance with the category or stage of the process in which they occurred.

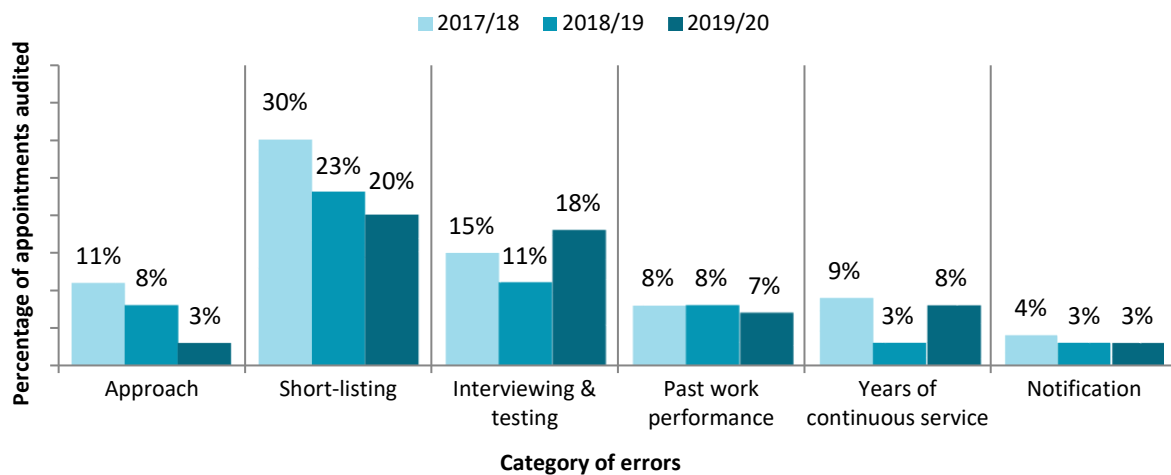
These categories (the overall approach and the five common stages of hiring) are defined below.

Description of the Categories	
Approach	The overall structure of the hiring process and the elements, from the initial notice to final rank order of qualified candidates and offers of appointment, that are necessary to support merit-based hiring.
Short-listing	The initial review of applications (e.g., cover letters, resumes, application forms or questionnaires) to determine which individuals possess the necessary requirements for further consideration. These requirements are typically education and experience.
Interviewing and testing	The assessment of the more qualitative requirements necessary for performance (e.g., knowledge, skills, and behavioural competencies) through a variety of methods (e.g., interviews, tests, practical exercises, presentations, and role plays).
Past work performance	The evaluation and/or verification of the requirements (qualifications, standards of conduct etc.) necessary to perform the role through, at a minimum, a reference from a supervisor or equivalent.
Years of continuous service	Credit for the amount of time an employee has been continuously employed by the BC Public Service assessed for positions covered by the BC Government and Service Employees’ Union (BCGEU), or the Professional Employees Association (PEA) collective agreements and calculated at the end of the process using a prescribed formula. While credit for this time may also be given to positions not covered by a union agreement, there is no requirement to do so.
Notification	Unsuccessful employee applicants must be notified of the competition’s final outcome in order to have access to their recourse rights in accordance with the Act.



While each appointment resulted in an overall recruitment and selection process finding, some appointments had only one error whereas others had errors in multiple categories. Chart 2 shows the number of appointments with errors in each of these categories as a percentage of all appointments audited, over the past three fiscal years.

Chart 2 Percentage of Audited Appointments With Errors Per Category



Notes:

- The percentages show the number of appointments with one or more errors per category. As some appointments had errors in more than one category, the percentages do not sum to 100 percent.
- The percentage for years of continuous service is based on all positions covered by BCGEU and PEA agreements, as well as other positions where this factor was considered.
- Caution should be used in comparing to prior year percentages of appointments with errors given changes made to audit practice in 2018/19.

The percentages of appointments with errors decreased or remained consistent for all categories with the exception of interviewing and testing, and years of continuous service. The largest decrease was in approach (five percentage points), and the largest increase was in interviewing and testing (seven percentage points).

Overall Errors

Beyond some appointments having errors in more than one category, a number of appointments had more than one distinct error within a given category. To determine the overall number of errors, all errors were counted. Of the 113 appointments with errors, 65 percent had a single error and 35 percent had two or more errors, resulting in a total of 176 errors. Although the percentage of appointments with errors is roughly the same as last year (43 percent compared to 44 percent in 2018/19), there was a 10 percent increase in the overall number of errors compared to last year's sample.



Individual Appointed Results

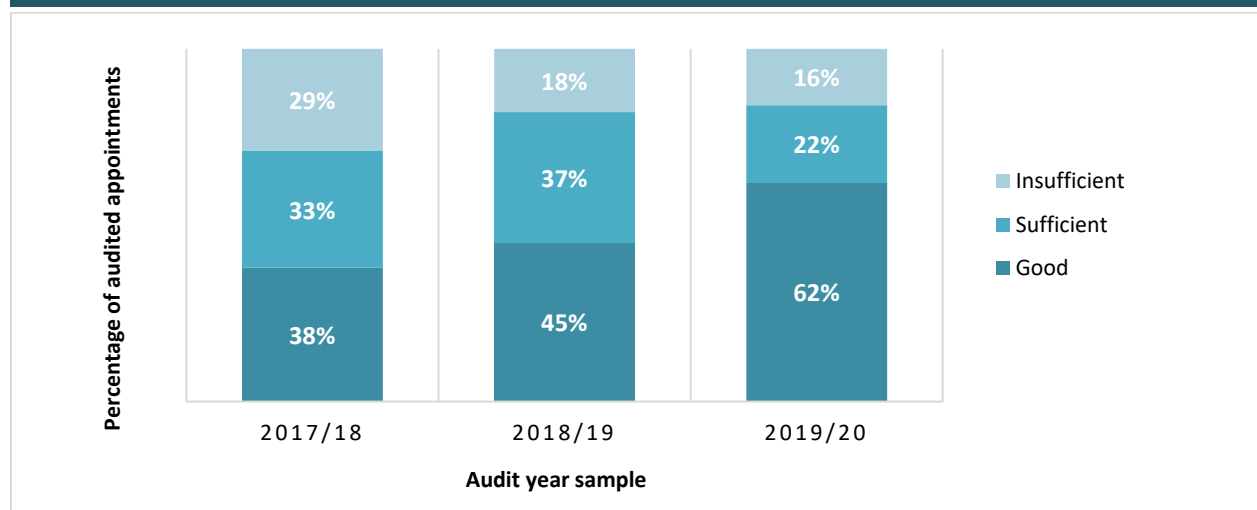
All but five appointed individuals were considered qualified. For two of these appointments, the individual, when appointed, did not possess the qualifications as required for the position. For the three other appointments, the finding was “qualifications not demonstrated”. These audit results are consistent with past years and continue to indicate that the large majority of individuals being appointed meet required qualifications. There was no evidence of patronage in any appointments. Appendix D contains detailed observations of the individual appointed findings.

Documentation Results

Accountability for decision-making, in particular one as significant as the offer of an appointment in the BC Public Service, requires that the decision and the steps leading up to it, be documented. For 166 of the 267 audited appointments, the competition was well documented requiring little or no follow-up with the hiring manager in order to conduct a thorough audit. For 58 appointments, the documentation was found to be “sufficient”. In the majority of these processes, the hiring manager was required to provide clarification of and/or additional key documentation to substantiate hiring decisions. In the other hiring processes with “sufficient” documentation, the hiring manager was unable to provide the missing documents; however, these were not critical and the auditor was able to complete the audit without them.

For the remaining 43 appointments, the documentation was determined to be “insufficient”. Generally, in these cases, one or more essential elements were missing or not adequately documented and the auditor had to take into consideration ad hoc evidence, verbally or in writing, in order to conduct the audit.

Chart 3 Documentation Results





As shown in Chart 3, the overall quality of documentation has improved when compared to audit results in the previous two audit cycles. Appendix E contains detailed observations of the documentation findings.

Discussion of 2019/20 Results

Integral to appointments based on merit are: open and transparent processes; objective and relevant means of assessment; equitable treatment of applicants; and reasonable decisions. The strengths and areas of risk in BC Public Service hiring as demonstrated by the results of the 2019/20 Merit Performance Audit are discussed in light of these principles.

Open and Transparent Processes

Opportunities continue to be open to external applicants with 78 percent of the positions audited this year posted out-of-service. Along with standard competitions, the audit observed several other approaches that were employed to fill multiple vacancies efficiently (i.e., inventories, batched processes, and competitions to establish province-wide eligibility lists). While fewer large processes were audited than in previous years, the ones examined were all well designed and implemented. With respect to all hiring processes, all but two were open to a reasonable pool of candidates. Most of the notices provided potential applicants with a clear description of the type of process and the application requirements. Some notices could have been more transparent about the process such as: indicating the possibility of a permanent appointment from a notice for a temporary appointment; ensuring applicants are aware that they will be assessed and notified in groups according to their date of application for batched competitions; and stating if an eligibility list will be established, and if so, the parameters of its use.

With respect to qualifications, all notices this year identified the mandatory education and experience necessary to be considered and referred interested applicants to a job profile or equivalent for knowledge, skills and behavioural competencies that could be evaluated. There were a number of processes that subsequently assessed knowledge, a skill or a behavioural competency which, while found to be job-related, was not indicated in the job profile. A more transparent process would clearly identify all qualifications to be considered.

Communication with applicants at the conclusion of competitions was also strong with almost all individuals receiving notification of the outcome and their own status, which is critical to ensuring the protection of employee applicant rights to a staffing review. While errors in providing final notification were few, the quality of notification would be better if unsuccessful applicants were consistently given the appropriate details of the appointment (e.g., name and classification of appointed employee candidates, the correct number of initial appointments, and whether an eligibility list had been established).



Objective and Relevant Means of Assessment

It is well established practice within the BC Public Service to use structured and job-related methods of evaluation. The BC Public Service Agency offers a variety of effective assessment tools and supports to aid with these evaluations.

As in previous years, self-assessment questionnaires were used often for basic short-listing purposes. A new design issue was identified with the use of this tool which involved a lack of verification. It is important when relying on responses to these questionnaires to have some means of corroboration of applicant responses such as requiring supporting details of how they acquired the qualification, or by cross referencing their responses to the information provided in their resumes.

In several competitions, either all applicants were advanced to the interviewing and testing stage without any short-listing, or applicants were short-listed with no indication they were evaluated in accordance with the mandatory requirements. Similarly, in a number of processes, there were either interviews or written exercises where candidates were awarded a total mark for their performance but with no indication that they had been assessed in accordance with the established marking criteria. Although clear requirements or criteria existed in these cases, there was no evidence that they had been applied - instead there was only the final result without any substantive basis for it. While this may be an expedient way of progressing through a hiring process, it lacks the objectivity and consistency necessary to be fair. Further, it increases the risk that applicants may advance through the process and be successful without ever demonstrating that they possessed the essential job qualifications.

The main means of evaluating candidates continues to be interviews. All but one of the audited appointments involved an interview with a selection panel of two or more members and a set of standardized questions. Both of these measures increase the objectivity of assessment. Almost all interviews had a few behavioural competency questions, with some using only behavioural competency questions. Of concern were instances where this approach was improperly applied which may be indicative of a lack of knowledge as to the use of this assessment approach. Over two thirds of the processes audited used one or more methods of evaluation in addition to the standard interview. This use of multiple means of assessment ensures a well-rounded evaluation of candidates while adding credibility to selection decisions. The most frequent methods of additional assessment were written exams or exercises developed for the specific position or, standardized online skill tests usually employed for competitions with large numbers of applicants. The audit also observed the use of oral presentations, role play scenarios and practical job simulation exercises.

Using a variety of means to assess candidates is good practice; however, the lack of relevant marking criteria across these methods of assessment continues to be of concern. Several processes had no marking criteria and a number of others had either partial marking criteria or relied upon a corporate rating scale with generic grading (e.g., “good” or “8/10”) to award marks. Whether assessing



behavioural competencies, knowledge, or skills, some form of substantive criteria (e.g., behaviourally anchored rating scale, key points or essential elements) is fundamental to ensuring an objective and consistent basis for marking. This concern has been identified over a number of successive audits.

The principle method of assessing past work performance continues to be references obtained from current or previous supervisors via a standard set of questions. This method meets both the requirements of the *Act* as well as the BC Public Service hiring policy requirement for at least one reference from a supervisor or equivalent. For the most part, a standardized template designed to assess general aspects of performance was used to collect information. Some panels increased the effectiveness of this tool by adding job-related questions or verifying the behavioural competencies assessed. Of concern was the continued reliance by some panels on referees to rate candidate performance in various areas on a generic quantitative scale (e.g., “7/10”). Not only is this approach uninformative, it can introduce subjectivity and lead to an inconsistent assessment of candidates.

Equitable Treatment of Applicants

Overall, it was clear that selection panels were careful to treat candidates fairly throughout the hiring process. Unfortunately, there were some errors in judgement or administration that unfairly disadvantaged one or more applicants. With respect to judgement, the most frequent problem occurred during short-listing when the panel decided to alter a requirement(s) described in the posting as necessary to be considered. The individuals who had applied were consistently considered in accordance with the altered requirement; however, individuals who wanted to apply but did not as they did not possess that requirement as it was originally stated were disadvantaged. There were also times when one or more individuals were short-listed based on a subjective factor (e.g., a panel member’s personal knowledge of an individual’s background) whereas other applicants were not afforded the same opportunity; however, these incidents continue to be rare.

There were also problematic determinations involving past work performance. Some panels chose to defer reference checks for employee candidates who were placed on an eligibility list. This decision meant that these individuals were notified of their final status in the competition before they were fully assessed and, as a result, their access to recourse may have been affected. Had an individual later failed the subsequent reference check, their right to seek a review would have been negated by being outside the statutory time limit. There were also a few occasions where a supervisory reference for a candidate was not readily available, so the panel decided to complete references with colleagues instead. In addition to being contrary to BC Public Service hiring policy, these decisions resulted in the inconsistent treatment of candidates. Further, it is unlikely that the performance information obtained was as relevant and reliable as that provided by a supervisor.

There were also a number of unintentional mistakes found across almost all categories (short-listing, interviewing and testing, years of continuous service and notification), most of which were due to an



incorrect calculation or transcription of points. As a result of these errors, some candidates who should have passed an early assessment stage were eliminated, and several candidates, who actually failed a stage, were appointed, or placed on the eligibility list in the wrong rank order. With more care, these administrative mistakes were preventable.

Lastly, the audit found a noticeable improvement in the overall state of documentation again this year. Most processes, including those large competitions with in excess of 400 applicants, were well or sufficiently documented, and in the majority of insufficiently documented files, the hiring manager or a ministry representative was able to provide verbal evidence and key information that allowed the auditor to complete the audit. There were no processes that resulted in a “merit not applied” finding due to a lack of documentation.

Summary

The findings of the merit performance audit have been largely consistent with the previous audit cycle. Findings for individual appointed continue to be excellent with almost all found to be qualified. The state of documentation also continues to be positive with 84 percent of the appointments determined to have sufficient or better supporting evidence. For recruitment and selection processes, the findings continue to be close to 60 percent “merit”. Open and transparent processes to evaluate applicants continued to be areas of strength for the BC Public Service and most processes employed objective and relevant methods of assessment.

While the findings are generally positive, opportunities remain to improve recruitment and selection processes - 43 percent of appointments audited in 2019/20 had one or more errors. The areas of greatest risk may be attributed to expedient or perfunctory methods of assessment, and judgement calls or administrative mistakes that impact the equitable treatment of applicants. Of note:

- The short-listing stage was the category with the greatest number of appointments with errors. Typically, these errors involved decisions to change, lower or waive mandatory qualifications or requirements. It is recognized that this category has also shown the most improvement over this year and the previous year.
- The most frequent error across categories involved assessment tools and standards, specifically, a lack of substantive marking criteria and an over-reliance on generic marking scales. There were also errors where tools and standards existed but were either incorrectly used or not applied.
- The errors with the most serious impacts arose from judgement and administrative mistakes. These errors accounted for the majority of “merit not applied” findings.

Prior to being finalized, this report was shared with the Agency Head, whose response is attached in Appendix F.



Recommendations

Based on the findings and most significant issues identified through the 2019/20 Merit Performance Audit, the Merit Commissioner makes the following recommendations which are, for the most part, directed to deputy ministers and organization heads. It is recognized, however, that action and assistance from the BC Public Service Agency may be necessary to support the implementation of these recommendations.

Based on the findings, there are three recommendations for deputy ministers and organization heads for their delegated hiring managers.

1. As was recommended in the 2018/19 audit, review education and experience qualifications prior to posting to accurately identify which are mandatory and which are preferred, and state where alternatives may be acceptable.
2. Establish and properly use assessment standards and tools (e.g. apply short-listing criteria; and identify and apply marking criteria) which are appropriate for the specific hiring process.
3. Verify the accuracy of candidate standing at each stage of the process prior to progressing to the next stage.



Appendix A

Organizations Subject to the Merit Commissioner's Oversight of Appointments

(As of March 31, 2020)

Ministries

Advanced Education, Skills and Training
Agriculture
Attorney General
Children and Family Development
Citizens' Services
Education
Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources
Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Finance
Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
Health
Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness
Labour
Mental Health and Addictions
Municipal Affairs and Housing
Public Safety and Solicitor General
Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Tourism, Arts and Culture
Transportation and Infrastructure

Independent Offices

Auditor General
Elections BC
Human Rights Commissioner
Information and Privacy Commissioner
Merit Commissioner
Ombudsperson
Police Complaint Commissioner
Representative for Children and Youth

Courts of British Columbia

BC Court of Appeal
Provincial Court of BC
Supreme Court of BC

Other Public Sector Organizations

Agricultural Land Commission
Auditor General for Local Government
BC Farm Industry Review Board
BC Human Rights Tribunal
BC Pension Corporation
BC Public Service Agency
BC Review Board
Civil Resolution Tribunal
Community Care and Assisted Living Appeal Board
Destination BC
Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal
Environmental Appeal Board
Financial Services Tribunal
Forest Appeals Commission
Forest Practices Board
Health Professions Review Board
Hospital Appeal Board
Independent Investigations Office
Industry Training Appeal Board
Islands Trust
Mental Health Review Board
Office of the Premier
Oil and Gas Appeal Tribunal
Property Assessment Appeal Board
Public Guardian and Trustee
Public Sector Employers' Council Secretariat
Royal BC Museum
Safety Standards Appeal Board
Surface Rights Board
Workers Compensation Appeal Tribunal



Appendix B

2019/20 Recruitment and Selection Process Observations

Recruitment and selection processes are usually conducted in a sequential manner starting with a notice of the opportunity, receipt of applications and the creation of a short-list of candidates who meet the minimum requirements, usually education and experience. A selection panel (the panel) is convened to examine less easily observable qualifications such as knowledge, technical skills and general skills (e.g., behavioural competencies), through a variety of assessment methods. Subsequently, past work performance is assessed and years of continuous service are considered. The process ends with an offer of appointment to the successful candidate(s) and notification to unsuccessful applicants of the outcome and their status.

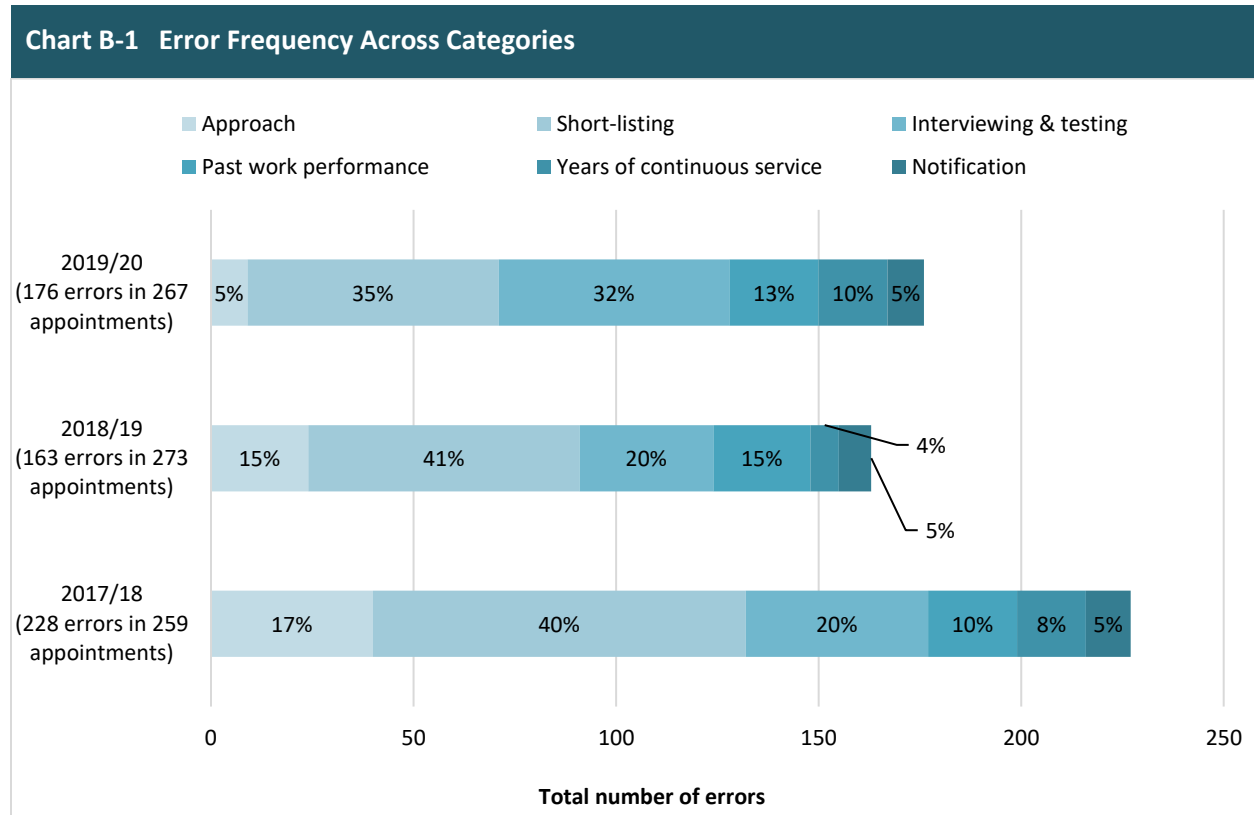
In accordance with the *Public Service Act* (the *Act*), the Merit Commissioner must consider whether the recruitment and selection process is properly designed and applied to result in an appointment based on merit. Where the process is found to meet this standard, the resulting finding is “merit”. In 2019/20, 154 of the audited recruitment and selection processes were found to be properly designed and applied, and resulted in appointments based on merit. The remaining 113 processes audited had one or more errors and, as such, resulted in either a finding of “merit with exception” or “merit not applied”.

Table B-1 provides a breakdown of the 176 errors by the category in which they were identified and shows them as a percentage of total errors.

Category of error	# of errors	% of total errors
Approach	9	5%
Short-listing	62	35%
Interviewing & Testing	57	32%
Past Work Performance	22	13%
Years of Continuous Service	17	10%
Notification	9	5%
Total	176	100%



Chart B-1 illustrates these same values (number of errors per category, as a percentage of overall errors), for the last three audit years.



It is the impact of the identified errors that ultimately determines whether a finding is “merit with exception” or “merit not applied”. Errors may result in one of three impacts as follows:

- **Unknown impact:** It is not possible to predict the effect the error has on the outcome. Typically, these errors occur at the beginning or middle of a hiring process. For instance, if an applicant was wrongly short-listed out of a process, there is no way to tell if they would have passed the rest of the assessment and been offered an appointment.
- **Mitigated impact:** While there is a potential adverse effect from the error on the outcome, subsequent events or decisions alleviate this impact. For example, a successful candidate for whom no supervisory reference was obtained, declines the offer. As such, the impact of appointing an individual without considering a critical factor of merit is mitigated.
- **Negative impact:** There is an observable adverse effect that is a result of the error on the outcome. For example, due to a miscalculation of interview scores, the wrong candidate is appointed to the position.



Where the error(s) identified in an audit has either unknown and/or mitigated implications, the recruitment and selection process finding is “merit with exception”. Where one or more errors have adverse impacts, the finding is “merit not applied”.

In 2019/20, of the 176 errors identified, 62 percent had an unknown impact, 29 percent had impacts that were mitigated and 9 percent had a known negative impact.

To provide a sense of the types of problems encountered in the 2019/20 audit and the frequency with which they occurred, the errors are grouped into and examined in accordance with the category in which they were identified: approach, short-listing, interviewing and testing, past work performance, years of continuous service, and notification.

Approach

The approach refers to the overall structure of the hiring process and the necessary elements that ensure it is merit based. It encompasses the start of the process with some form of notice of the opportunity and the formulation of a selection panel. It also includes having a standardized approach to evaluation and results that are in keeping with the approach as shown in Case Study B-1.

Case Study B-1: A well-designed approach

An out-of-service posting for a senior clerical position attracted a number of applicants. The responsibilities, qualifications required to apply, and the application requirements were clearly outlined in the posting. Applicants were required to submit a self-assessment questionnaire which was assessed by the panel for the required education and experience and verified against supporting resumes. In addition to the evident evaluation of an applicant’s qualifications in accordance with each requirement, there was also a rationale for the resulting short-listing decision. Short-listed candidates completed a practical exercise assessing job-related knowledge and skills. Those candidates who passed were interviewed by a three-person panel for behavioural competencies, role alignment and verbal communication skills. The panel clearly awarded points in accordance with: an answer guide developed for the exercise; target-level descriptors from the standard interpretive guides for behavioural competencies; key aspects to show alignment role; and a standard set of elements for communication skills. Where necessary, there was a rationale for points awarded. A customized template was used to obtain references from a current and a previous supervisor for each qualifying candidate and years of continuous service were properly considered. Candidates were offered appointments or placement on an eligibility list in accordance with their competition score and ranking. Overall, the approach was open and transparent, with objective and relevant assessments, reasonable decisions and the equitable treatment of applicants.

The audit considers whether the type and scope of the hiring process are fair, and whether sufficient notice of the opportunity is provided to a reasonable pool of applicants. It assesses whether the



selection panel is objective, the requirements are clear and relevant, and the standards are reasonable. It also considers whether the final rank order of candidates and subsequent offers of appointment and placements on an eligibility list are consistent with the approach. All who apply must be accounted for throughout the competition.

2019/20 Observations

In 2019/20, one or more approach errors were found in three percent of the audited appointments.

Number of appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
9 (3%)	9	3	1	5

Type of approach

Of the 267 appointments audited, 253 (95%) were for permanent positions. In addition to standard competitions, several other types of competitions designed to fill multiple vacancies were audited. As these latter processes often resulted in many appointments, occasionally more than one appointment from the same competition was selected for audit.

Nine of the audited appointments arose from four inventory processes examined in this audit cycle. While these processes were generally well constructed, the design of one inventory had implications for the subsequent appointments arising out of it. This observation is discussed in Appendix C, Inventory Observations. There were also 11 audited appointments from three batched competitions where the postings were open over the course of several months in order to attract a large number of applicants. The processes were well designed and the audits were able to account for the status of the applicants in accordance with their assigned batch. An audit of one of the processes noted that it could have been more transparent had the posting indicated that applicants would be short-listed, assessed and notified of the results in discrete batches determined by their application date. Case Study B-2 describes an effective batched approach.

In 153 (57%) of the audited appointments' selection processes, an eligibility list was established, with 39 (15%) of the audited appointments arising out of these eligibility lists. While no errors were directly attributable to the use of eligibility lists in this audit, there were some notes for improvement suggesting that their use would be more transparent had the posting stated an eligibility list may be established or that the eligibility list may be used to fill vacancies for similar positions elsewhere in the ministry.



Case Study B-2: An effective batched approach

To fill hard-to-recruit enforcement positions in a number of locations, the ministry posted an ongoing notice outlining the mandatory qualifications, assessment process and tentative interview dates. Applicants who demonstrated the minimum requirements were batched for further assessment based on the dates they applied and the submission of their verification documents (e.g., grade 12 diploma, drivers license). Candidates completed a standardized work simulation test, a physical fitness test and a security screening questionnaire and those who passed were interviewed. Following the assessment of past work performance, candidates were issued offers provisional on the results of an enhanced security screening and a medical check. Subsequently, candidates were appointed in accordance with their batch and preferred location, when required checks were successfully completed. While some of the start dates varied for a particular location, these variations were due to late notification of the screening or medical results, or candidate availability, which were factors that were outside of the panel's control. Applicants were effectively tracked throughout this complex process and appointments were made in a fair order.

Scope and elements

Of the 267 audited appointments, in 59 (22%), the opportunity was available to a limited group of individuals (also referred to as a restricted area of competition). Fifty (19%) of the appointments resulted from competitions restricted to BC Public Service employees, with 13 of these further restricted to the organization, an organizational unit within a ministry, an organization within a geographic area, or a specific group of employees. For the remaining nine appointments not restricted to BC Public Service employees, these appointments were made from opportunities restricted to inventory members.

A few hiring processes were found to be missing an essential element. In one process, the opportunity was restricted to the branch where only two individuals possessed the unique qualifications, one of whom was already in a similarly classified position. Given this was a specialized position within this organizational unit, narrowly restricting access failed to make the opportunity available to a reasonable applicant pool. Another hiring process lacked the rigour of a standardized approach resulting in numerous serious errors throughout – as such, it was not possible to conclude that the process was fair or that the appointment of one candidate over another was not arbitrary. A third process is described in Case Study B-3.



Case Study B-3: No notice of a permanent opportunity

Instead of issuing or circulating some form of notice to a potential applicant pool for a junior clerical position, the panel chose to consider the resumes of two applicants already on file. These resumes had been recently received as the result of an outreach initiative with local job-related learning institutions. The hiring representative explained that resumes received in this manner are usually considered for filling opportunities on a temporary basis as the position had a high turnover rate. Due to the number of opportunities that existed at the time, the ministry representative advised that a decision was made to fill one of the vacancies with the resumes on file on a permanent basis. While this may have been an expedient method of identifying applicants, it lacked the key element of notice that is required for a merit-based approach and it is contrary to the BC Government and Service Employees' Union's collective agreement which requires that regular positions to be posted.

Outcome and results

In some hiring processes, the results were inconsistent with the approach. This was the situation for two temporary opportunities in which the initial posting did not indicate that a permanent appointment was possible. Following each of the successful candidates' temporary appointment, they were permanently appointed to the same position without further competition. These processes lacked transparency as potential applicants interested in permanent positions may have concluded that this opportunity was limited to appointments of a temporary nature and, therefore, did not apply.

In two other processes, the offers of permanent appointments were inconsistent with the candidates' final rank order. In one file, the candidate with the second-highest interview score was ranked first and received the initial offer; whereas, the candidate with the highest interview score, was ranked second and advised that they had been placed on the eligibility list. The hiring manager explained that the rank order on the rating guide had been reversed in error. The other process is described in Case Study B-4.

Case Study B-4: Appointments made out of rank order

As a result of a competition for an administrator position, a candidate was appointed to a permanent position and three others were placed on an eligibility list. A few months later, the candidate who placed third on the eligibility list was appointed on a permanent basis to another administrator position. The hiring representative advised that the first and second candidates on the eligibility list, were purposely passed over as they already held temporary appointments to similar positions. While both of these candidates were eventually appointed on a permanent basis to the administrator position as a result of the competition, the candidate who placed first on the eligibility-list was last to receive a regular appointment. Based on this sequence of events, the permanent appointments were made out of rank order and as a result, the highest-ranked eligibility list candidate was disadvantaged as two lower-ranked candidates were permanently appointed months earlier.

Lastly, several audit reports observed challenges related to the breaking of tied scores. While candidates with tied scores in many of these cases were not advantaged or disadvantaged as initial offers of



employment were made to all impacted candidates, notes in the audit report reinforce the importance of breaking these ties with merit-based criteria when rank order is necessary.

Short-listing

Short-listing refers to the process of reviewing applications (e.g., cover letters, resumes, application forms or questionnaires) for the mandatory requirements to be considered. At this initial stage of the hiring process, requirements such as education and experience, two of the factors of merit specified in the *Act*, are assessed. As well, other related requirements are reviewed such as professional designations, certifications and licences, which can be confirmed through a review of applications and do not require a qualitative assessment. In addition, preferred qualifications may also be considered.

The audit examines whether the design is reasonable, and the criteria are relevant and consistent with the qualifications identified as essential in the posting and/or job profile, and upon which potential applicants base their decision to apply. The audit also considers if the criteria are applied consistently across applicants, and if short-listing decisions are reasonable and transparent.

2019/20 Observations

Short-listing was the category in which the highest number of errors were identified. Of the 267 appointments audited, 54 (20%) had one or more errors attributed to short-listing.

Number of appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
54 (20%)	62	44	17	1

Almost all appointments audited had a short-listing stage and in 70 percent of the audits, panels considered responses to self assessment questionnaires in addition to applicants' resumes to conduct short-listing.

For the 267 appointments audited, there were 246 competitions as some of the appointments audited were from the same process. Of these competitions, 232 were considered standard competitions and these processes attracted a range of 1 to 502 applicants. A more detailed examination showed that a median of 31 individuals applied on competitions posted out-of-service with a median of 10 candidates short-listed for further consideration. For competitions posted in-service, a median of 9 individuals applied with an average of 5 candidates short-listed for further consideration. An additional 14 competitions were considered to be non-standard processes (such as inventories) designed to attract large numbers of applicants, and there was a range of 101 to 1812 applicants for these processes. The



median number of applicants was 473 with a median of 152 candidates short-listed for further consideration.

No short-listing or basis for it

All but a few hiring processes had some form of short-listing. In two competitions, multiple applicants were advanced with no review of whether their applications demonstrated the education and experience stated as mandatory. Without a method of ensuring individuals who progress possess the minimum qualifications, there is a risk that unqualified candidates could be appointed. In a number of other processes, while it was apparent that some form of short-listing had taken place, there was no evidence of the criteria used and how applicants were assessed in accordance with it. Without a basis or a rationale for short-listing decisions, it is not possible to determine whether the applicants were fairly advanced or eliminated. Case Study B-5 describes an example of this issue.

Case Study B-5: No basis for short-listing decisions

For a policy analyst job, the short-listing document consisted of a column indicating if the applicant should be short-listed or not (yes or no). For all but one applicant, the decision was “yes” and these candidates were short-listed. For the one applicant where the decision was “no” there was an associated comment that the individual lacked related experience. There were no similar comments for the candidates who were short-listed or any indication of the short-listing criteria used. In response to the auditor’s request for clarification of short-listing, the hiring representative advised that the panel assessed applicants for the relevant qualifications from the job profile. The job profile contained a mixture of mandatory and preferred education and experience as well as an equivalency statement for the required education. While the audit concluded that short-listing had taken place, without the details such as which of the qualifications were used and how each applicant was assessed in accordance with these, it was not possible to confirm that the process was fair.

Design

A few other hiring processes had problems in the design of the short-listing method such as using a point-rated system. While point rating is not an issue in itself, the methods in question allowed applicants who did not possess each of the mandatory qualifications to advance.

A new design concern was identified involving self-assessment questionnaires. Generally, these questionnaires were composed of a mixture of short-form (selecting the most accurate response from a drop-down menu) and free text responses. The short-form responses were used to indicate aspects like level of education, or the years of a type of experience, and the free text responses were for the applicants to further explain how they had acquired the qualification. In a few instances, the use of the questionnaire was problematic with the panel relying on applicants’ short-form responses that they had the required experience without any form of verification – there was no associated free text box for applicants to describe how they had obtained the experience nor were their responses cross referenced to the information in their resumes. Case Study B-6 describes a process where qualifications were



reasonably verified and a Case Study in Appendix C describes a process where they were not.

Case Study B-6: Thorough short-listing approach

To apply for a financial position, applicants had to submit a self-assessment questionnaire and a resume. The questionnaire required short-form responses where the best descriptor of a qualification was chosen from a drop-down menu (e.g., related degree, unrelated certificate, 5 years of experience in accounting,) and long form responses where applicants described how they had obtained each qualification. A few applicants who indicated they did not have any statistical experience in response to a short-form question were “knocked out” and not considered further. Although the posting indicated that applicants’ resumes may not be used for short-listing, both the resumes of the remaining applicants and their long form questionnaire responses were examined to determine if the qualifications necessary to advance were evident. Three quarters of the remaining applicants were found not qualified for a variety of reasons such as, unrelated education, insufficient amount of related experience or the experience described was inconsistent with that indicated by the questionnaire. In addition to determining whether applicants possessed each qualification (yes or no), there was a summary rationale for why they should or should not be short-listed. This was a thorough short-listing approach that minimized the risk of hiring someone not qualified.

Finally, with respect to design, a number of audit reports recommended improving the transparency of the qualifications to be used for short-listing. The most frequent suggestion was that the posting clearly indicate the minimum mandatory qualifications individuals must demonstrate in their applications in order to be considered instead of requiring individuals to show in their applications how they meet all of the qualifications including education, experience, knowledge and skills.

Application and results

The most frequent concern identified at this stage was when the panel decided to change a requirement that had been stated as essential in the posting. These types of changes included: waiving the necessity for a cover letter; accepting less than the stated number of years of required experience; and, allowing an alternative to an educational qualification when there was no statement that equivalencies might be considered. Typically, the hiring panels’ intentions were to be more inclusive or to allow more candidates to advance by changing a requirement; however, this decision also disadvantaged individuals who may have applied if they had known the requirement was flexible as opposed to essential given the wording used in the posting. For those who did apply, they were consistently assessed in accordance with the altered condition or qualification with no negative implications. See Case Study B-7.



Case Study B-7: Unclear and reduced requirements

The posting for a consultant position stated that to be considered, applicants must submit a cover letter and an application that demonstrated how the listed qualifications were met – the listed qualifications included all of the education, experience, knowledge, and skills contained in the job profile. According to the short-listing document, the panel intended to assess applications for the cover letter, business administration diploma or certificate and three mandatory experience qualifications. However, during short-listing, the panel waived the need for a cover letter and the diploma or certificate, and instead, examined applications for two of three mandatory experience requirements. The hiring representative advised that they made this decision in order to consider a reasonable number of applicants. While all applicants were treated fairly in accordance with the revised short-listing criteria, it was other interested individuals who were disadvantaged – those potential applicants may have applied had they known the minimum required criteria would be less than that posted. Further, it would have been clearer if the posting had indicated which criteria would be used for short-listing and directed applicants to demonstrate how they met those specific criteria in their applications instead of listing all the qualifications from the job profile.

There was one instance where the panel decided to add a qualification that was not stated in the posting or job profile in order to short-list applicants. As a result, applicants did not have a fair opportunity to speak to this qualification in their application.

There were also a number of competitions found to have inconsistent short-listing. In about half of those identified, some applicants were advanced while others with very similar qualifications were eliminated. In most of these situations, the hiring manager was uncertain why the discrepancies had occurred. In the other half, one or two candidates assessed by the panel as not meeting the mandatory qualifications were advanced, or conversely, a few candidates assessed by the panel as meeting the requirements, were not advanced. Most of these discrepancies were attributed to unintended mistakes. Case Study B-8 illustrates an approach that helped to ensure the equitable treatment of applicants and Case Study B-9 describes one in which the panel erred.

Case Study B-8: Objective basis for consistent short-listing

The posting for an excluded manager position outlined a number of experience requirements that may be open to interpretation. To short-list, the panel developed guide which provided direction on determining if a qualification was met. For example, with respect to experience writing persuasive arguments or decisions, persuasive meant “explaining the basis for a decision or interpretation to a third party who may not agree with the arguments/decision” and decision meant having “the final say on the matter”. Using this guide, a screening sheet was completed for each applicant which showed how they met or did not meet the necessary qualifications. This approach helped to short-list a large number of applicants in a consistent and objective manner.



Case Study B-9: Short-listing decision based on the wrong application

Both the posting and job profile for an executive administrative position stated three years of administrative experience as a mandatory requirement without any indication that equivalencies could be considered. An individual who had less than the required three years of experience according to their resume, was short-listed. The hiring representative explained that due to mix up of applications, the individual had been incorrectly credited with another candidate's experience. As a result of this error, the unqualified individual advanced and was ultimately appointed.

In two cases, the panel representative explained that candidates who appeared unqualified were advanced either due to the panel's additional knowledge of the candidates' work, or because the candidates were in-service. In both examples, this inconsistent short-listing resulted in some candidates being unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged.

Interviewing and Testing

Essential to any hiring process is the assessment of the knowledge and skills (inclusive of behavioural competencies) necessary to undertake a role. These qualifications are the more qualitative factors of merit identified by the Act and as such, require in-depth methods of assessment. One or more methods may be used (e.g., interviews, tests, practical exercises, presentations, and role play scenarios), and these may be ordered sequentially such that only those who pass one (e.g., test) may progress to the next (e.g., interview). Candidate performance is assessed both individually in accordance with set standards and relative to others in the competition.

The audit considers whether assessment methods are well designed and relevant, and job-related marking criteria (e.g., behavioural indicators, key points, correct responses or essential elements) are established to provide an objective basis for marking. The audit also examines whether candidate performance is reasonably assessed in accordance with the marking criteria and consistent with other candidates' assessments. Candidate point scores and rank order are examined to ensure accuracy.

2019/20 Observations

Of the 267 appointments audited, 49 (18%) had one or more errors identified with respect to interviewing and testing.

Number of appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
49 (18%)	57	43	10	4



All but three of the appointments audited in 2019/20 involved an interview. Of the 264 interviews, 203 (77%) assessed a mixture of knowledge, skills, and/or behavioural competencies, whereas 57 (22%) assessed behavioural competencies only, and another three (1%) assessed knowledge and skills only. With respect to the three appointments that did not have an interview, the candidates were assessed through other means such as written tests and role play scenarios.

It is generally accepted that using multiple assessment methods adds credibility and validity to the decisions resulting from the selection process. The majority of audited appointments (188 or 70%) had one or more methods of assessment in addition to an interview, such as a written exercise or presentation. For the other 79 (30%) appointments, an interview in conjunction with mandatory past work performance checks, were the means by which short-listed candidates were assessed. Case Study B-10 looks at creating a fair practical exercise.

Case Study B-10: Well designed practice exercise

For a senior policy analyst position, candidates were required to complete a written exercise assessing analytical and communication skills. This exercise required the preparation of a briefing note and recommendation of action to be taken, if any, for consideration by the ministry executive. Two fictional articles and a briefing note template were provided. The topic and issue were unrelated to the work of the ministry to prevent candidates working in the organization from having an advantage. The marking guide consisted of key elements necessary to demonstrate the required skills such as: understanding of the issue; validity and accuracy of the information discussed; clear and concise writing; and correct usage of vocabulary and grammar. Further, candidates' identifying information was removed from the assignment prior to marking to prevent the panel from knowing whose assignment they were assessing. This was a well thought out practical exercise that was both job-related and objective.

Design

A fair assessment process requires some form of job-specific marking criteria against which to evaluate responses in an objective and consistent manner. The most frequent error was the lack of assessment standards. In the majority of cases, this involved no marking criteria such as behavioural indicators, ideal answers or key elements for one or more of the interview questions. In other cases, a corporate rating scale with generic qualitative or quantitative grades (e.g., "good" or "8/10") was used to mark responses. While this latter approach may be simpler, without any sense of the substantive aspects expected, there is no common basis for panel members to determine the quantitative or qualitative grade warranted by responses. Further, without such a basis to review the marking, it is not possible for the audit to determine whether the assessment of candidates was fair.

There were also several problems with the design of behavioural competency assessments. Behavioural interviews are designed to explore one competency per question to allow candidates to have a clear



opportunity to present an example that speaks expressly to that competency. With this approach, the panel may consider either the behaviours indicated in direct response to the question posed; or they may consider supplemental evidence of the same competency from all of the candidate's responses in addition to that which they demonstrated in response to the question posed (referred to as pattern scoring). In this audit, a few panels used an assessment method in which they attempted to assess an unreasonable number of competencies through a single question without a structured marking rubric. There was another process where the panel decided that the best way to remedy an administrative error that impacted one candidate, was to assess that individual against different competencies than the other candidates. While it would have been reasonable to use different interview questions that assessed the same competencies, the decision to assess different competencies resulted in an inconsistent process. Case Study B-11 illustrates concerns with marking a behavioural competency assignment.

Case Study B-11: Lack of marking criteria and marking information

An assignment for a managerial position required candidates to provide written responses to two questions involving leadership and change management in a complex environment. The marking guide for the assignment, identified eight behavioural competencies to be assessed. Each assignment had an overall determination of "pass" or "fail" noted on it, without any marking details such as comments on or points ascribed to the specific responses or the individual competencies. The hiring representative advised that they had examined the completed assignment for all of the identified competencies, and passed those that demonstrated the minimum level for each. However, other than the general definition of each competency, there was no marking criteria to indicate this level (e.g., target levels, behavioural interpretative guides). Without specific marking criteria, it was not possible to determine whether the panel had an objective and common basis for evaluation. It also seemed unlikely that candidates had the opportunity to meaningfully demonstrate their competency in each of the eight areas, and lacking any qualitative or quantitative evaluation of either the specific responses or individual competencies, or a rationale for the overall determination, it was not possible to establish if the evaluation was fair or reasonable.

In a few interviews, it was apparent that the panel lacked an understanding of how to evaluate behavioural competencies as they used only the general competency definitions to assess responses. Instead, responses to a competency question should be evaluated in accordance with a pre-established behavioural anchored rating scale that provides appropriate behavioural indicators at various levels of performance complexity or proficiency. There are ready-made scales for the behavioural competencies established by the BC Public Service Agency which are referred to as the behavioural interpretive guides.

There were a number of notes for improvement where panels had identified the behavioural competencies to be assessed and used the behavioural interpretative guides to mark responses; however, the question or sub-questions were formulated to assess knowledge or potential skill (e.g., describe the steps you would take to manage a project) and not behavioural competencies. As the behavioural interviewing approach is specifically designed to assess competencies based on candidates'



previous demonstration of the behaviour, more appropriate questions to assess knowledge or skills would ask for past examples (e.g., “Describe a time you managed a project and the steps you took.”).

Less common design concerns involved the assessment of suitability or fit without any structure such as specific questions or identified elements for consideration, marking criteria, or rationale.

Marking and results

With respect to marking, there were some assessments where the panel only indicated who passed or failed, or awarded an overall point score with no break down of how the marks were awarded to each response or element assessed. While these processes usually had established marking criteria, without knowing how candidates were marked in accordance with them, it was not possible to determine if the marking was objective and consistent. See Case Study B-12 for a transparent marking approach.

Case Study B-12: Specific and clearly applied marking criteria

A hiring process for an excluded manager had detailed marking criteria for each method of assessment and the panel marked clearly in accordance with the criteria. To evaluate the written exercise, scoring guides that identified expected sections (e.g., current state, plan, implementation), and mandatory and preferred elements within each section (e.g., identifies gaps, defines staff roles, gains senior level support) were completed for each candidate. In addition, a communication matrix was completed for each candidate. The matrix had the key elements (e.g., sentence structure) with a definition of the element under each point rating on a scale of one to four – for example, a sentence structure that was clear and varied from simple to complex with correct punctuation was worth four points. With respect to the behavioural interview, each question had a target level identified for the competency being assessed and the associated standardized interpretation guide. The guides were used as score sheets for candidates and were marked with observations, notations and scores. Lastly, a role play scenario required candidates to deliver an “off the cuff” presentation to deputy ministers. Again, individual marking sheets were completed for skills in accordance with several identified behaviours (e.g., “builds credibility based on using expertise in an honest and consistent manner”). There were also individual communication and presentation matrices completed for each candidate with the key elements (e.g., organized, logical flow) and their definition.

The audit identified some appointments in which significant calculation or transcription errors had implications for candidate results and status in the process. There were also numerous appointments with minor errors of this nature that had no impacts. As candidates' scores determine relative merit and standing in a competition, it is important that marks are accurately determined and recorded. Less common were mistakes or oversights in advancing candidates who should not have progressed or conversely, not advancing candidates who should have progressed. An example of this type of error is described in Case Study B-13.



Case Study B-13: Technical spreadsheet problems

In this process, candidates were required to obtain over 90 percent on an administrative skills section of an online clerical skills test in order to advance to the interview. The file evidence indicated a number of candidates had obtained or surpassed the necessary pass mark; however, the audit identified inconsistencies between the established pass mark and the point scores of the candidates who were advanced. The hiring representative reviewed the materials and found that when the scores were transferred between worksheets on an Excel spreadsheet, the data had become corrupt. This technical problem led to a number of candidates being assigned the wrong point score. As a result, several candidates, who had failed to achieve the pass mark, were advanced in error and several others, who had met or exceeded the pass mark, were eliminated in error.

Past Work Performance

Past work performance evaluations are conducted to evaluate and verify suitability for the position (assessment findings, values, standards of conduct etc.). As a factor of merit in legislation, past work performance must be considered and, as specified by BC Public Service hiring policy, must include at least one reference from a supervisor or equivalent.

The audit examines whether the method of assessing past work performance is fair and includes a supervisory reference for each individual appointed and for any employee candidates placed on an eligibility list. The audit also considers whether performance is objectively and consistently assessed in accordance with the position requirements, and the resulting determinations are reasonable.

2019/20 Observations

Past work performance was assessed for all 267 appointments through obtaining references, usually using a standardized template designed to assess general aspects of performance. In 78 percent of the processes, the performance observations were assessed on an overall pass/fail basis and in the other processes the individual areas of performance were rated on a quantitative or qualitative scale. In 91 percent of the audited hiring processes, all candidates assessed for past work performance passed. In the remaining nine percent of appointments, one or more candidates did not pass this factor.

Of the 267 appointments audited, 20 (7%) had one or more errors involving past work performance.

Number appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
20 (7%)	22	12	4	6



No past work performance

The most common error in this category was the decision to defer reference checks for employee candidates placed on eligibility lists. As there was no certainty that these individuals would pass a subsequent assessment of past work performance, their rights to recourse (including the right to request a staffing review by the Merit Commissioner) may have been negated by premature notification of their status. In order to ensure they are accurately informed of their standing at the end of the competition, employee candidates must be fully assessed prior to placement on an eligibility list. Case Study B-14 provides an example of this type of error.

Case Study B-14: Deferring the assessment of past work performance

An out-of-service competition for a technical position resulted in the appointment of two employee candidates and the placement of three other employee candidates on an eligibility list. While references were completed for the two appointed candidates, they were not completed for candidates on the eligibility list nor did the final notification letters indicate that a future appointment would be dependent on the successful completion of references. The auditor followed up with the hiring representative who explained that references were only obtained for the successful candidates and that references would be obtained for eligibility list candidates if other vacancies became available. However, this approach is problematic as all factors of merit must be fully assessed for employee candidates before they are notified of their final status in the process. Failure to do so can have a negative impact on the employee's rights to request a staffing review.

There were also many competitions where reference checks were deferred for non-employee candidates placed on eligibility lists. Given external candidates do not have the same right of recourse and that they may, in fact, prefer that their current supervisor is not contacted until there is an actual appointment about to be offered, it is reasonable to postpone the assessment of this factor for these individuals. However, in these circumstances, the notification letters and notes on file should indicate a future offer of employment would be conditional on the successful completion of a supervisory reference. In several instances where notification letters to external candidates on an eligibility list did not include this specification, it was noted as an area for improvement in the audit.

Design

In a number of audited appointments, the panel did not use a standardized approach to assess past work performance for all candidates. Either different templates were used to gather performance information or the same template was used but different areas of performance within the template were assessed. While these assessments covered similar areas, there were also essential areas of performance that were evaluated for some candidates and not for others (e.g., communications skills, interpersonal skills). It is important to ensure that the essential areas of performance are verified for all candidates.



There were also a number of appointments audited where referees were asked to provide qualitative (e.g., “satisfactory”, “poor”) or quantitative (e.g., “7/10”) ratings in various areas of performance. Having a referee score performance lacks the objectivity and consistency provided by having the panel (or a panel member) determine the points or rating warranted based on the referee’s description or observations of performance. In these cases, this practice was noted as an area for improvement as the panel considered the referee’s scores in making their own decision whether the candidate passed or failed this factor, rather than relying on the referee’s score to make this determination. Case Study B-15 provides an example of a well thought out past work performance assessment approach.

Case Study B-15: Thoughtful approach to assessing past work performance

A competition for social services positions was restricted to employees within a large organizational unit of the ministry. The panel customized the standard reference template to include the main areas of performance required for the position and set out the approach to assess past work performance. A primary reference from a current supervisor was required for all candidates. Where this supervisor had overseen the candidate’s performance for less than six months, a second reference was required from either a suitable referee provided by the candidate or a leader within the unit who could knowledgeably speak to the candidate’s performance. As well, where potential concerns were identified in the primary reference, a second reference was required. Based on the discussions with the referee(s), the responsible manager would determine if the candidate passed or failed this factor, unless there were multiple managers conducting references. In that case, the managers would review past work performance decisions together to ensure consistency. This was a well considered approach to assessing past work performance that was job related and consistent.

Application and results

The most serious errors resulted from not obtaining a supervisory reference as required by BC Public Service hiring policy. In these cases, while references were obtained, co-workers and colleagues had provided the reference for one or more of the candidates appointed or placed on the eligibility list. Case Study B-16 describes one such process.



Case Study B-16: Lack of a supervisory referee

A process to fill analyst vacancies resulted in a number of appointments. The panel obtained two references, one of which was provided by a direct supervisor, for each for the successful candidates with the exception of two individuals. Although both candidates had provided a list of referees consisting of current and past supervisors and co-workers from their current employment with the same company, only a reference provided by a co-worker had been obtained. From notations on file, it was apparent attempts had been made to contact several of the listed supervisors; however, the hiring manager advised that due to the company's policy, none of those contacted were willing to provide a reference. Instead of seeking out other supervisors from the candidates' previous jobs with different companies, the hiring manager decided to proceed with the appointments on the basis of the single collegial reference. As a result, the audit found this factor had not been reasonably assessed for two of the appointed candidates, as well the BC Public Service hiring policy requirement for a reference from a supervisor or equivalent was not met.

There were also a number of notes for improvement where it was unclear whether a supervisory reference had been obtained. Typically, in these instances, a current or past supervisor was a member of the hiring panel and had knowledge of the candidate's performance. While these audits were able to conclude that past work performance had been assessed in some form with a supervisor, it would have been more transparent to indicate how the panel had assessed this factor.

Years of Continuous Service

In accordance with the *Act*, employees' years of continuous service with the BC Public Service is to be considered. Where the position is covered by either the BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) or the Professional Employees Association (PEA) collective agreement, there is a formula to calculate this factor at the end of the process. For positions not covered by a collective agreement, this factor is to be considered but there is no requirement to apply a formula or additional points. Where this factor is assessed, the method for doing so and the results should be clearly evident.

The audit considers if the hiring process requires the calculation and application of points for years of continuous service in accordance with the respective collective agreement and, if so, that the calculations are accurate and correctly applied. For other positions (not BCGEU or PEA) where years of continuous service are assessed, the audit examines whether it is done consistently and accurately.

2019/20 Observations

Of the 267 appointments audited in 2019/20, the collective agreement provisions of either the BCGEU or PEA applied in 202 cases. Additionally, in two of the excluded appointments audited, the panel opted to calculate years of continuous service as part of the assessment process. Of these 204 appointments, 16 (8%) had errors identified with the application of years of continuous service.



Number of appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
16 (8%)	17	0	17	0

No years of continuous service

There were several audited processes where this factor was either not considered or it was calculated but not added to candidates' competition scores as described in Case Study B-17. This type of error has the potential for impacting the final standing of candidates.

Case Study B-17: Not add to the overall competition score

At the end of this competition, the points for this factor were calculated correctly for the employee candidates based on the prescribed formula and each candidate's years of service. However, when the panel determined the candidates' overall competition scores, they missed including the points for this factor for two of the three employee candidates. A note on file from a hiring representative indicated that this error had been discovered during the preparation for the audit. As a result of the error, the final rank order of the eligibility list was incorrect for three of the four individuals.

Application and results

The most frequent issue identified was the use of an incorrect overall competition score as the basis for calculating points. Using an incorrect score can have serious implications, especially for large competitions as described in Case Study B-18. There were also other types of errors such as incorrectly identifying the years of service, or adding the points for this factor on to candidate scores twice.

Case Study B-18: Using the wrong competition score

The prescribed years of continuous service formula for positions covered by the BC Government and Service Employees' Union is outlined in the collective agreement and calculated on the basis of 10 percent of the total competition score. In a provincial competition for social service positions, the audit observed that this factor had been calculated using a different number than the actual total competition points. The hiring representative reviewed the concern and advised that the competition results template had not been updated to show the total competition points for the current process. As such, the wrong number was inadvertently used as the basis of the formula. A recalculation of this factor based on the correct total competition points, and found that the overall ranking of candidates changed, as did the ranking of candidates on several of the location-specific eligibility lists.



Notification

Unsuccessful employee applicants must be notified of the competition’s final outcome in order to have access to their recourse rights in accordance with the Act. Timely notification allows employees to seek feedback and challenge the merit of an appointment through the staffing review process should they choose to do so.

The audit examines if unsuccessful employee applicants, including those who may not be considered eligible or short-listed, are properly advised of the final results of the hiring process. The audit also notes where necessary details regarding the final outcome may have been omitted or are inaccurate. Notification errors do not result in “merit not applied” findings as these occur after the hiring decisions are made and there cannot be a known negative outcome.

2019/20 Observations

Of the 267 appointments audited, almost all applicants were provided with proper final notification. This included the inventories where unsuccessful applicants were typically notified through online notification boards managed by the BC Public Service Agency.

Number of appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
9 (3%)	9	7	2	n/a

No final notification

The most common problem identified was that one or more employee applicants did not receive final notification of the appointment decision. In a few of these cases, employee applicants who had been deemed ineligible for being outside the restricted area of competition, did not receive final notification. In other cases, while employee applicants eliminated at the short-listing or written assessment stage received interim notification, they were not informed of the final outcome. A case related to lack of notification is described in Case Study B-19.



Case Study B-19: Lack of notification

At the conclusion of an in-service competition for multiple senior clerical positions, six candidates were offered permanent appointments and another three were placed on an eligibility list. While one of the eligibility list candidates immediately received an auxiliary appointment, there was no evidence that this same individual had been given final notification that they were unsuccessful for the permanent positions but had been placed on the eligibility list. In addition, the final notification letter sent to the rest of the unsuccessful candidates identified five of the six successful employee candidates—the name and classification of a sixth candidate appointed to a permanent position was missing. The panel representative explained that these oversights may have been due to confusion about the letters in particular with respect to the eligibility list. Without proper final notification, candidates' access to the right of review provided by the *Act* may have been impeded.

Application and results

In a couple of the audited appointments, due to an administrative error, candidates were incorrectly notified of their rank on the eligibility list. This information is important for individuals to make decisions about other career opportunities and can impact careers if candidates are appointed in the wrong order. Further, subsequent appointments may be impacted if the eligibility list as identified in the notification letters is used by other hiring managers who are unaware that candidates were incorrectly ranked.

There were many notes for improvement with respect to this aspect of the competition process. The three most common were: ensuring the name and classification of all successful employee candidates are provided as required by the BCGEU and PEA collective agreements; indicating the accurate number of initial appointments instead of using the generic statement that “another candidate will be appointed to the position”; and, indicating that an eligibility list has been established where appropriate. There were several other less common notes involving other pieces of information that were missing or incorrect, such as not offering feedback or mis-stating the duration of an eligibility list.



Appendix C

Inventory Process Observations

In 2019/20, a number of hiring processes within the BC Public Service were restricted to candidate inventories. An inventory is a pool of candidates who have undergone some degree of assessment and are considered pre-qualified for a specific position or a range of positions, normally at the same classification level.

Where an appointment selected for audit arose out of a competition restricted to members of an inventory, both the process used to establish the inventory and the subsequent hiring process were audited. An audit report was prepared about the inventory creation which identified any areas of weakness specific to either its creation or replenishment, and any issues that could lead to an adverse finding for the subsequent hiring processes. The inventory audit report was sent to the organization(s) responsible for establishing the inventory.

With respect to the subsequent hiring process that resulted in the appointment, a standard audit was conducted that identified any errors or areas for improvement that were either directly attributable to a weakness in the establishment of the inventory or were the result of the subsequent hiring process. The appointment-specific audit reports were sent to the responsible deputy minister.

2019/20 Observations

Of the 267 appointments audited in 2019/20, nine arose from a hiring process restricted to one of four candidate inventories. Of these appointments, one was made from an Employment and Assistance Worker inventory established and audited in 2018/19. The remaining eight appointments were made from newly created or replenished inventories. Table C-1 summarizes the inventory processes audited by the Office of the Merit Commissioner (the Office) in the 2019/20 Merit Performance Audit.

Table C-1 Summary of Inventories Audited in 2019/20		
Inventory name	Number and type of intakes in 2019/20	# of audited appointments
Employment & Assistance Worker (Community Program Officer 15)	N/A (intake audited 2018/19)	1
Employment & Assistance Worker (Community Program Officer 15)	1 inventory establishment	1
Clerical (Clerk 9/Clerk Stenographer 9)	1 inventory establishment and 1 replenishment process	6
Forest Technician (Science Technical Officer 18)	1 replenishment process of the inventory established in 2017/18	1
Total	4	9



Both the number of inventories and the number of inventory-based appointments audited in 2019/20 were lower than in the previous two audit cycles: 22 appointments from seven inventories in 2017/18 and 22 appointments from 10 inventories in 2018/19.

Of the four inventory processes examined in this audit cycle, the only concern identified involved the replenishment of the clerical inventory where the lack of a process to verify the experience claimed by applicants in their short-form responses to the self-assessment questionnaire was noted. Some parts of the questionnaire required applicants to select statements describing the extent and type of their experience from a pre-set list (e.g., “Select the statement that best describes your years of customer service experience” or “Please select all statements that best describe your relevant customer service experience.”). However, for some of these pre-set lists, applicants were not required to provide an associated descriptive response to demonstrate when, where or in what capacity their experience was acquired, nor did the inventory team check applicant resumes for confirmation. The absence of a verification process poses a risk to future appointments arising from that inventory by creating the potential to appoint someone fundamentally unqualified (see Case Study C-1).

Case Study C-1: Risk of Unverified Qualifications in Inventory Establishment

In this competition, a number of candidates from the inventory were referred to the hiring manager as pre-screened to the posted job requirements and ready to assess through an interview. The resumes of these candidates were also provided with the proviso that they were “for records only.” The audit identified that the appointee potentially lacked the financial experience required based on a comparison of their inventory questionnaire responses and their resume; however, the panel’s assessment process was sufficiently robust and the audit was able to determine that the appointee’s qualifications and performance in the hiring process met or surpassed the mandatory requirements and assessment standards.

By contrast, the two position-specific inventories audited in 2019/20 both incorporated mechanisms by which applicant qualifications were verified, albeit at different stages of the selection process (see Case Study C-2 and Case Study C-3).

Case Study C-2: Confirmation of qualifications at short-listing

In addition to the required education and experience, the posting noted that registration or eligibility for registration in a specific professional body was required. The application questionnaire also specified that questionnaire responses had to be supported by detailed information in a resume. The panel’s approach to short-listing ensured that the only applicants who advanced were those who provided proof of their eligibility, enrollment, or registration in the professional association and whose resumes validated their questionnaire responses.



Case Study C-3: Confirmation of qualifications after assessment

All applicants who met the short-listing requirements based on their questionnaire responses advanced to on-line skills assessment. The inventory hiring team then reviewed the resumes of all candidates who passed this assessment to ensure they met position requirements for education and experience.

Inventories typically attract a large number of applicants and, in this audit year, the inventory establishment and replenishment processes audited by the Office attracted between 101 and 1812 applicants. While the scale of these processes presents a number of challenges, the audit observed that the overall tracking and management of applicants through the selection process continues to improve.

Inventory processes also continue to make use of the online Inventory Results Notification Board to advise of appointments arising from the inventory, and to provide unsuccessful candidates with the name and contact information of the individual available to provide feedback about the selection process.



Appendix D

Individual Appointed Observations

In accordance with the *Public Service Act*, each audit undertaken by the Merit Commissioner results in two findings. One of these findings is whether the individual appointed was qualified.

The 2019/20 Merit Performance Audit found that the appointed individuals met the qualifications specified as required for the position with the exception of five cases. In two audits the appointee under audit was found to be “not qualified”, and in three audits the finding was “qualifications not demonstrated” as there was insufficient evidence to determine that the individuals, when appointed, possessed the required qualifications.

In the first of the two cases in which the audit found that the appointee was not qualified, the individual failed to achieve the required pass mark for an online assessment. The hiring manager explained that, in the process of recreating the spreadsheet to identify the top candidates, the assessment score data for several candidates became corrupt and incorrectly showed a passing score. As a result, these candidates were advanced in error and one was subsequently appointed.

In the second case, the appointee did not possess the three years of experience stated as required in the posting and job profile against which applicants were short-listed. The hiring manager advised that the appointee had been incorrectly credited with another candidate’s experience due to a mix-up of applications, advanced to the next stage, and was ultimately appointed.

In the three cases where the appointee had a finding of “qualifications not demonstrated”, the issue was that the references obtained to assess past work performance were from co-workers or peers. Policy requires that at least one reference must be obtained from a supervisor or equivalent as these individuals are in an appropriate position to comment on and evaluate a candidate’s past performance as it relates to the qualifications being assessed at that stage in the selection process. The audits concluded that without an acceptable supervisory or equivalent reference, it could not be confirmed that the candidate met the past work performance standards required for the position.



Appendix E

Documentation Observations

When appointments are selected as part of the annual merit performance audit, the hiring ministry, agency or organization provides the Office of the Merit Commissioner (the Office) with a complete copy of the competition file in paper and/or electronic format. These files are examined and, in addition to making findings about the merit of the process and the qualifications of the appointee, each audit reports on how well the competition documentation supports the hiring decision, categorizing it as “good”, “sufficient” or “insufficient” in this regard.

When properly documented, a competition file is a comprehensive, standalone record of every aspect of the hiring process such that, when examined, no additional information or clarification is required to conduct the audit. In the 2019/20 Merit Performance Audit, there was a marked improvement in the quality of competition documentation when compared to the merit performance audit results in prior years. In 62 percent of the audited appointments in this cycle (compared to 45 percent in 2018/19), the documentation supporting the appointment was determined to be “good”. Of the 166 audit files deemed to have “good” documentation, auditors were able to complete 53 audits based exclusively on the submitted competition documentation, and the remaining 113 required only minimal clarification from the hiring manager.

In 22 percent of the audited appointments, documentation was deemed to be “sufficient” to support the hiring decision. In these files, the details of one or more aspects of the process were either not clearly documented or missing. In cases where documentation was unclear, the auditor required supplemental information and/or an explanation of part of the hiring process in order to complete the audit. In files with missing documentation, a determination of “sufficient” was made when the hiring manager was able to provide adequate information to support the panel’s process or if the existing file documentation provided enough evidence that the appropriate process was followed (e.g., a file in which the interview notes of one panel member were missing but the notes of other panel members were available).

In 16 percent of the audits, the documentation was determined to be “insufficient”. For the majority of files that received an “insufficient” determination, there was insubstantial or no documented evidence of how one or more key aspects of the recruitment and selection process were assessed, and/or how decisions were made. To complete these audits, the auditor considered additional evidence provided by the hiring manager or a ministry representative. Where this supplementary information was specific and sufficiently detailed such that the auditor was able to determine that the issue was a problem with documentation and not an error for that aspect of the selection process, the audit reported this as insufficient documentation (see Case Study E-1). In two other files with insufficient documentation, the



information provided by ministry representatives was inadequate to resolve discrepancies identified by the audit.

Case Study E-1: Missing past work performance

Past work performance (PWP) is a factor of merit that must be assessed during a hiring process and all appointments to the BC Public Service must include an employment reference from a supervisor or equivalent. In this competition, there was no documented evidence that past work performance had been assessed for the appointed candidate. Under the merit audit process, failure to assess past work performance would normally result in a finding of merit not applied; however, in this case, the hiring manager provided substantive verbal evidence that this factor was assessed for this candidate during the competition. As a result, the merit not applied finding was avoided but the competition documentation was deemed to be insufficient.

Documentation issues were found in all stages of the hiring process, and in almost two-thirds of the audits that resulted in an “insufficient” documentation determination, it was inadequate at more than one stage of the competition. Consistent with previous merit performance audits, the most problematic areas of documentation were, in order of frequency: interviewing and testing, short-listing and past work performance. The most frequently identified information gap related to interviewing and testing was poorly documented or missing marking criteria. The most common issue for short-listing was the failure to clearly or adequately document the basis for decisions. Past work performance documents were most frequently unclear in terms of describing the type of referee (current or past supervisor).

In past audit years, the number of applicants in an audited competition had a direct bearing on the quality of documentation and competitions with more than 100 applicants were typically found to have insufficient documentation more frequently than smaller competitions. However, in this audit year, the documentation of large competitions had notably improved. None of the audited files with over 400 applicants received an “insufficient” documentation determination, and only 11 percent of competition files with 101-400 applicants were identified as “insufficiently” documented.

As identified in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 Merit Performance Audits, this year’s merit performance audit faced some challenges obtaining information for inadequately documented competitions in which the individuals responsible for the hiring decisions had either moved to other positions or retired. In these cases, the ministry representative newly identified as the primary contact for the purpose of the audit often had to invest a significant amount of time and effort to try to find the missing documentation or to determine what occurred over the course of the hiring process. These inefficiencies can be prevented when a competition is comprehensively documented.



Case Study E-2: Excellent Documentation

The documentation of this large competition file (563 applicants) recruiting for multiple vacancies in multiple locations over a period of several months, was comprehensive and well organized.

Documentation of the process was clearly indexed and filed for each candidate for each stage of the competition. The documentation also included a detailed, step-by-step summary, prepared to support the audit, that fully described what was evaluated at each stage of assessment, how it was evaluated including requirements to pass each stage and tracking notes clearly identifying candidates progress (fail, pass or withdraw).



Appendix F

Response from the Deputy Minister of the BC Public Service Agency (Agency Head)



Where ideas work

December 11, 2020

CLIFF #6534

Ms. Maureen Baird, QC
Merit Commissioner
Office of the Merit Commissioner
5th floor – 947 Fort Street
Victoria, BC V8W 2C4

Dear Ms. Baird:

Thank you for sharing a confidential draft copy of your 2019/20 Merit Performance Audit Report. I am pleased to respond as the Deputy Minister of the BC Public Service Agency.

Your draft report indicates continuing positive trends in merit-based findings in almost all stages of the hiring process. I am pleased to see there has been no evidence that any appointments were the result of partisanship or favoritism as we strive to appoint qualified individuals across the public service.

The BC Public Service Agency has supported and promoted the public service as an inclusive employer and worked to align hiring practices in a way that is objective, fair and inclusive.

I will continue to promote the use of inclusive hiring practices as we strive to recruit a diverse and qualified workforce that represents the people we serve.

Yours sincerely,

Bobbi Sadler
Deputy Minister

pc: Joanne Hanson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources Services and Solutions, BCPSA

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