

# 2020/21

## Merit Performance Audit Report

UPHOLDING FAIR HIRING IN THE  
BC PUBLIC SERVICE

December 2021

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## Executive Summary

A total of 5681 appointments were made to and within the BC Public Service from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. Of these, the Office of the Merit Commissioner audited 269 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 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.

Most notable this year were our findings with respect to the recruitment and selection process, which can be extrapolated to all appointments of a similar type made throughout the BC Public Service in the 2020/21 fiscal year. Our findings showed that:

- 71% of appointments were found to be “merit”;
- 27% of appointments were found to be “merit with exception”; and,
- 2% of appointments were found to be “merit not applied”.

Our findings involving the qualifications of the individuals appointed continued to be outstanding. In all but one audit, we found the individuals whose appointments were selected for audit had the qualifications specified as required for the position.

We also found the state of documentation to be very good with 86% of the appointments determined to have sufficient or better supporting evidence.

With regards to the recruitment and selection processes, it has been over 10 years since our “merit” findings were greater than 70% of the audited appointments. While this audit observed a substantial increase in merit findings compared to previous years, the results are in keeping with an overall positive trend we have observed over the last three audit cycles. Whether this was due to an unusual year or sample, or if these improvements are indicative of permanent changes for the better will be determined by the next few audit cycles.

As a part of each audit, we examined the overall approach and the five standard stages of each competition process to determine where the errors were most likely to occur. The standard stages are: short-listing, interviewing and testing, past work performance, years of continuous service and notification. The number of appointments with errors occurred at a similarly low rate as found in previous years for the approach, past work performance, years of continuous service and notification. While short-listing, and interviewing and testing remain the two stages of the process where errors were most likely to happen, we found a notable decrease of appointments with errors in these categories. These were positive findings; however, we did detect 113 errors in 29% of audited appointments leaving opportunities for improvement to increase the number of fair recruitment and selection processes.

We also examined the errors in the context of fair hiring principles. These principles are: open and transparent processes; objective and relevant means of assessment; and reasonable decisions and equitable treatment of applicants. We continued to find open and transparent processes to be a hiring strength as is the establishment of objective and relevant means of assessment. While we saw improvements in the assessment of applicants, there are still a number of panel mistakes or decisions that resulted in the unreasonable decisions or inequitable treatment of individuals. As a result, we found that administrative mistakes, combined with some errors in judgement, posed the greatest risk to merit-based hiring in 2020/21.

Based on our findings, the Merit Commissioner makes two recommendations for deputy ministers and organization heads for their delegated hiring managers. These recommendations have been previously made but continue to be relevant based on the results observed for this audit.

1. Review education and experience qualifications prior to posting to accurately identify which are mandatory and which are preferred for short-listing purposes and, state where alternatives may be acceptable.
2. Verify the accuracy of candidate standing at each stage of the hiring 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 BC 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.

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

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### Scope

The merit performance audit focuses on the appointments that form the long-term workforce of the BC Public Service. These are permanent and long-term (exceeding seven months) temporary appointments 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 2020/21 Merit Performance Audit, the Office collected quarterly lists of permanent appointments and long-term temporary appointments made in the organizations listed in Appendix A. A total of 5681 appointments were identified from April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021.

### Sample

For the results of the audit to be generalizable to all 5681 appointments, the Office selected a simple random sample of appointments each quarter based on a pre-determined sample size. Of the total sample of 280 appointments selected, we determined that 11 were out-of-scope, resulting in 269 appointments subject to audit. For more detail on the sampling methods used, see the *2020/21 Report on the Sampling Methodology and Extrapolations for the Merit Performance Audit* posted on the Office's website.

### Methodology and Criteria

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office chose a modified approach to the collection of documentation for appointments made in 2020/21. We 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. Some hiring managers required additional time to submit the competition documentation; however, all the materials were received in time to meet end of year final reporting.

Using the Office's established audit program, auditors assessed 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 (referred to as the hiring process), the auditors examined the overall approach and the five common stages of a competition. These stages are short-listing, interviewing and testing, past work performance, years of continuous service, and notification. The auditors assessed whether the hiring processes had been designed and applied in accordance with the requirements of the *Act*, relevant policy, and provisions of collective agreements. The auditors also evaluated the hiring process in accordance with fairness principles of an open and transparent process; objective and relevant means of assessment; and reasonable decisions and equitable treatment of applicants.

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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.

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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.

At the end of each audit, we made two findings: the recruitment and selection process finding, and the qualifications of the individual appointed finding. We also determined whether there was sufficient documentation. These findings and determination are described in the following tables.

**Table 1 Recruitment and Selection Process**

Criteria	Finding
The recruitment and selection process was 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	Audit 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	Determination
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

We 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.

## Reporting

The Office provided deputy ministers and organization heads with detailed individual audit reports for their organization in order that they may take any necessary action to improve hiring practices within their organizations and share findings with responsible hiring managers. We also provided the individual audit results 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.

The Merit Commissioner prepares this document, the Merit Performance Audit Report, which consolidates all audit findings to report on the overall results of the audit. This report is submitted to the Legislative Assembly and is posted on our website for the public.

## 2020/21 Audit Results

### Recruitment and Selection Process Results

Of the 269 appointments audited, we found 191 were the result of a merit-based recruitment and selection process with no errors. We found another 72 appointments were “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 six appointments, we found errors with negative impacts on the outcome, resulting in “merit not applied” findings. There are two appendices to this report that provide detailed observations and analysis: Appendix B for the general recruitment and selection processes and Appendix C for the audited inventory processes.

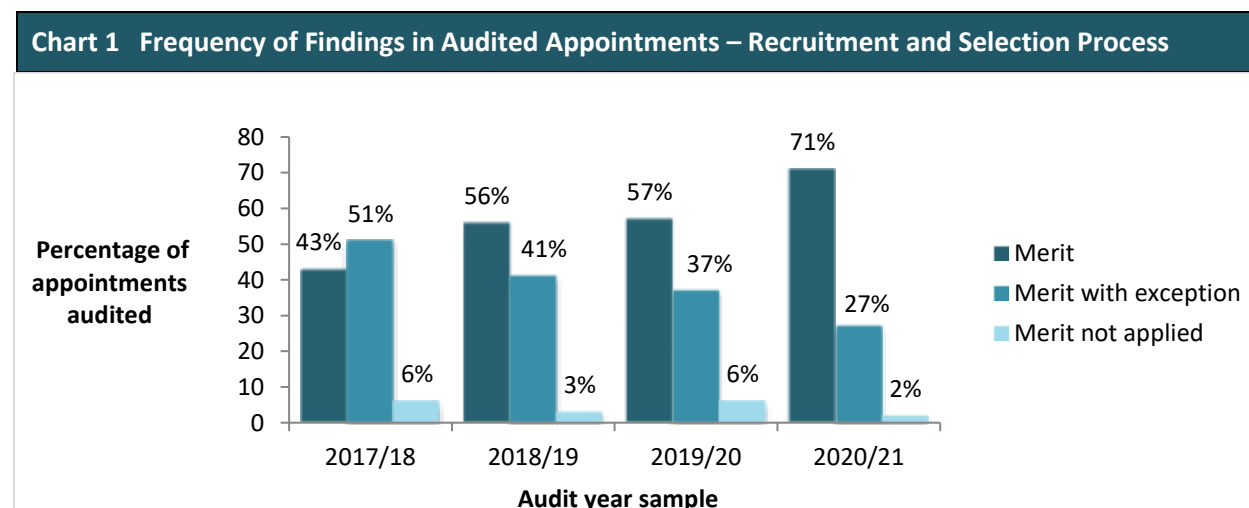
Table 4 shows the audit results extrapolated from the sample of audited appointments to the total population of the same types of appointments (i.e., permanent appointments and temporary appointments exceeding seven months) made from April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021 within specified margins of error. Further details can be found in the *2020/21 Report on the Sampling Methodology and Extrapolations for the Merit Performance Audit* posted on the Office’s website at: <https://www.meritcomm.bc.ca/>

Table 4 Overall Results – Recruitment and Selection Process			
Overall findings	Appointments audited		Extrapolated results – Estimated population
Merit	191	71%	3919
Merit with exception	72	27%	1405
Merit not applied	6	2%	120
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5444<sup>1</sup></b>

Note:

1: 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.





In the past few years, the proportion of audited appointments with a “merit not applied” finding has varied between 6% (2017/18 and 2019/20) and 2% (2020/21). Of interest is the steady decline in “merit with exception” findings over the past four years - from 51% in 2017/18 to almost half that number, 27%, in this year. The merit findings showed a corresponding increase over this timeframe.

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For 2020/2021 the relative proportion of findings with no errors was over 70% for the first time in 10 years.

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## Appointments with Errors

As indicated, 72 of the audited appointments resulted in a “merit with exception” finding and another 6 resulted in a “merit not applied” finding. This means that the audit found that 78 appointments had errors in their recruitment and selection process which is a total of 29% of the audited appointments. The errors are identified in the individual audit reports and in Appendix B of this report in accordance with the category or stage of the process in which they occurred.

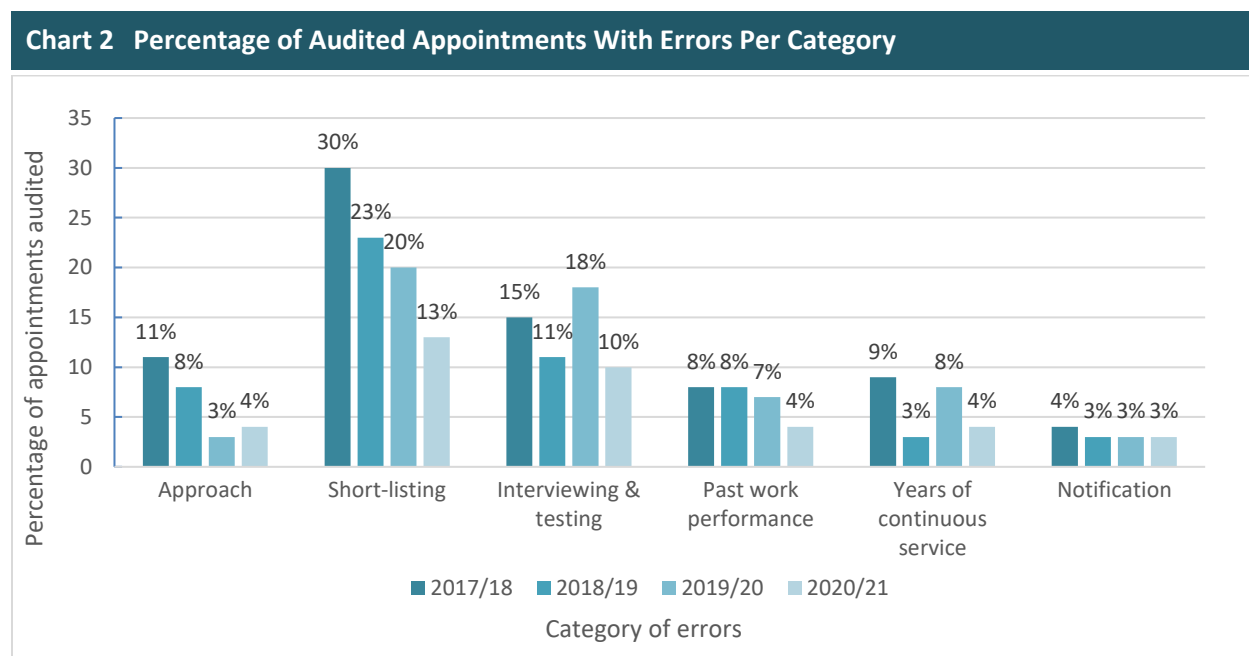
While each appointment resulted in a single overall recruitment and selection process finding, some appointments had only one error whereas others had multiple errors in one or more categories.

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

### Description of the Categories

Approach	The overall structure of the hiring process and the elements, from the initial posting to final rank order of qualified candidates and offers of appointment.
Short-listing	An initial review of applications (e.g., cover letters, resumes, 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 such as 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 continuous employment by the BC Public Service as required by the BC General Employees’ Union (BCGEU) and the Professional Employees Association (PEA) collective agreements, 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 proper access to their recourse rights granted in the Act.

Chart 2 shows the number of appointments with errors in each of these categories as a percentage of all appointments audited since 2017/18.



**Notes:**

- The table shows 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 fairly consistent for all categories. We found the largest changes were the decrease in the number of appointments with short-listing and with interviewing and testing errors. Overall, the percentage of appointments with errors is less than the last few years - 29% compared with 43% in 2019/20 and 44% in 2018/19.

### Overall Errors

Of the 78 appointments with errors, 55 (71%) had a single error and 23 (29%) had two or more errors, resulting in a total of 113 errors. Appointments with multiple errors may have had two or more distinct errors within the same category or, two or more errors in different categories, or some combination thereof. For example, for one appointment, there were three distinct errors identified: two involving short-listing and one involving years of continuous service.

### Individual Appointed Results

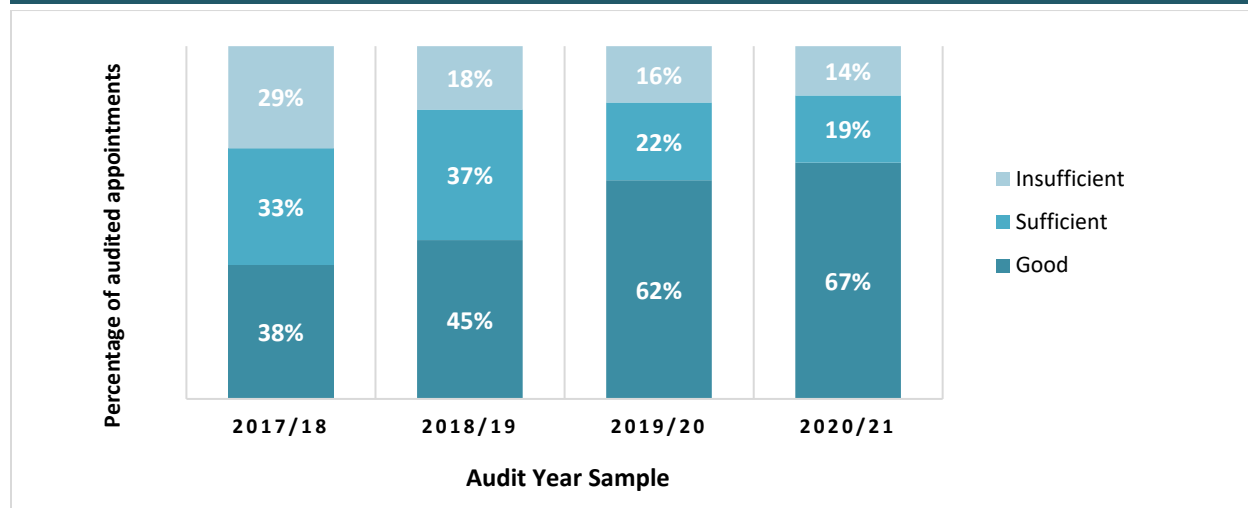
There was no evidence of patronage in any appointment. All appointed individuals, but one, were considered qualified. For this appointment, the finding was “qualifications not demonstrated”. These results are consistent with past years and continue to indicate that nearly all individuals being appointed to the BC Public Service meet required qualifications. Appendix D contains detailed observations of the individual appointed findings.

## Documentation Results

Accountability for decision-making, in particular a decision 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 179 of the 269 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 52 appointments, the competition was sufficiently documented. In these instances, there was incomplete or unclear documentation which required the hiring manager to clarify or explain certain aspects of the hiring process; however, there was adequate documentation to conduct the audit.

For the remaining 38 appointments, the competition was insufficiently documented. Generally, one or more key elements were not documented or poorly documented. In these situations, the auditor had to take into consideration ad hoc evidence provided by the hiring manager, 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 four audit cycles. Appendix E contains detailed observations of the documentation findings.

## Discussion of 2020/21 Results

The findings for individuals appointed continued to be excellent with almost all found to be qualified. The state of documentation also continued to be positive with 86% of the appointments determined to have sufficient or better supporting evidence. Our finding that 71% of the recruitment and selection processes were merit based is a much better result than in previous audit cycles. The last audit year in which we saw merit findings at this level was 2010.

We did find that 29% of the recruitment and selection processes audited this year had one or more errors; however, this is a positive finding in comparison to the past three audit cycles in which we identified errors in an average of 48% of audited appointments. The cause(s) of this increase in positive findings is unclear. If we observe a similar rate of merit findings over the next few audit cycles, the cause may well be attributed to fairer hiring processes. Alternatively, this increase may be due to an unusual year or uncharacteristic samples.

The following discussion considers the strengths and areas of risk in the BC Public Service as demonstrated in the results of the 2020/21 Merit Performance Audit. The strengths and risks are considered in light of our principles of fair hiring which are: open and transparent processes; objective and relevant means of assessment; and, reasonable decisions and equitable treatment of applicants.

### Open and Transparent Processes

We continue to see open and transparent processes as a strength in BC Public Service hiring. In the fiscal year observed, job opportunities were open to external applicants with 75% of the audited positions posted out-of-service. The other 25% were limited in some form (e.g., internal employees, work units, geographic locations), but all were found to be open to a reasonable pool of candidates. The majority of hiring processes were standard competitions and the rest were large processes designed to fill multiple vacancies efficiently (i.e., inventories, batched processes, and competitions to establish province-wide eligibility lists). Of these 21 large processes, we found that most were well designed. We found all processes had some form of notice describing the opportunity and the application requirements for prospective applicants. We found that a few postings would have been more transparent if they had included more details about the type of process or position. For example, posting would be clearer indicating the potential of a temporary position becoming permanent or that the establishment of an eligibility list was possible.

With respect to qualifications, all postings stated the education and experience required to be considered and most referred interested applicants to a job profile or equivalent for knowledge, skills and behavioural competencies that could be evaluated. In a few cases, the notice contained poorly described requirements or did not clearly identify the mandatory qualifications to be considered at the short-listing stage. There were also a number of processes that assessed knowledge, skills or competencies which, while found to be job-related, were not included in the posting or job profile. Accurate and clear qualifications are important for the transparency of the process, particularly for potential applicants.

It is essential that internal applicants receive proper notification of results so they may access their right to a staffing review. While there is no requirement to provide external applicants with notification of the results, it is a good practice to do so. We found that notification to applicants at the end of the hiring process was well done. In our audit, almost all individuals, internal and external, received notification of the outcome and their own status. While we identified very few errors involving notification, we continued to point out opportunities to improve transparency by ensuring notification includes correct information about the number of appointments and the names and classification of successful employee applicants.

We found the overall state of documentation has become better over the past few audit cycles. Most processes, including large competitions, were well or sufficiently documented. For the remaining competitions, insufficient documentation required more extensive follow up with and verbal evidence from ministry representatives to conduct the audit.

## **Objective and Relevant Means of Assessment**

We observed that the use of structured and job-related methods of evaluation remained a strength in BC Public Service hiring. Many panels took advantage of the assessment tools and supports offered by the BC Public Service Agency and, for the most part, used these well. However, there are still some problems that need attention.

As in previous years, self-assessment questionnaires were used in the majority of processes for basic short-listing purposes. The concern we identified last year, the failure of a panel to verify key questionnaire responses, was only evident in one competition this year. It is reassuring that the tool continues to be used appropriately.

Interviews continued to be the primary means of assessment. All but three of the audited appointments involved an interview with a selection panel of two or more members and a set of standardized questions. These measures are characteristics of an objective assessment. Almost all interviews had behavioural competency questions and some were dedicated behavioural interviews. Given readily available behavioural competency resources, including existing marking guides, this method requires less preparation time on behalf of panels. Also, with the large array of behavioural competencies, this method is easily used for almost any position. However, there was evidence that some panels lacked the necessary understanding to employ this method effectively, and as such, we suggested ways to improve its use in a number of audit reports.

Multiple means of assessment provide a more informed evaluation of candidates and increase the reliability of the hiring decision. In two-thirds of the audited processes, we found panels employed other methods of assessment in addition to an interview. Typically, the additional methods were either a written exercise created for the specific job or a standardized online skills test. Some panels used other tools such as oral presentations, role plays or practical job simulation exercises.

Whatever methods the panel chooses for assessment, there must be some form of substantive criteria (e.g., behaviourally anchored rating scale, key points or essential elements) to provide a common and impartial basis for marking. Over a number of successive audit cycles, we have observed that the highest risk to objective assessment has been the lack of marking criteria (whether none or partial) for written exercises or interview questions. However, this year, we found fewer problems of this nature, and in cases where marking criteria were lacking, they often involved a single interview question (e.g., an introductory question). While most assessments had established marking criteria and rating methodologies, we observed several instances where individual panel members used different methods to assess responses to the same written exercise. Given these deviations from the intended marking approach, we identified issues with the fair treatment of candidates.

All but one process used references as a means of assessing past work performance. For the exception, there was no evidence that this factor of merit had been assessed. Relying on references to assess past work performance meets both the requirements of the *Act* as well as the BC Public Service hiring policy requirement for a reference from a supervisor or equivalent. For the most part, panels used a standard template to evaluate general aspects of performance. Some panels increased the effectiveness of this tool by adding job-related questions or verifying the behavioural competencies assessed. In a few of the processes, we discovered panels using different templates in the same competition to collect performance information. As such, the same areas of performance were not assessed for the qualifying candidates. We also observed a few processes where panels relied on referees to rate candidate performance on a generic quantitative scale (e.g., “7/10”); however, there were fewer of these instances than we have observed in recent years. Not only is this approach uninformative, it can introduce subjectivity and lead to an inconsistent assessment of candidates.

## **Reasonable Decisions and Equitable Treatment of Applicants**

While it was apparent that panels intended to treat candidates fairly, the most numerous and serious issues arose from judgement or administrative errors that disadvantaged one or more applicants. Most of our concerns related to panel decisions were identified at the short-listing stage. For example, a panel’s decision to change a requirement described in the posting as mandatory resulted in the greatest number of audit-identified errors. While the individuals who applied were consistently short-listed in accordance with the changed requirement, this decision disadvantaged individuals who did not apply as they did not possess the requirements as originally stated. While infrequent, we also identified occasions where an individual was short-listed based on a subjective factor (e.g., an individual’s background was known to the panel) where other applicants were not given the same consideration.

In some other instances, there was a short-list of applicants but no or limited evidence of how individuals were evaluated in accordance with the mandatory qualifications. Similarly, in a few interviews or written exercises, there were total marks for candidates but minimal or no evidence of how their individual responses had been assessed in accordance with the marking criteria. While we could see that the panel had established means of evaluation in these processes, there was nothing to demonstrate if or how the panel had applied them as only final results were evident. This may be a quick means of assessment; however, it does not give any assurance that applicants were thoughtfully and

objectively evaluated. Further, it poses a risk that applicants may advance through the process and be successful without ever demonstrating that they possessed the essential job qualifications.

There were a few judgement errors in the assessment of past work performance. For example, we observed panels choosing 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. 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. We also found an instance where a supervisory reference for a candidate was not readily available and the panel decided to complete references with colleagues instead. In addition to being contrary to BC Public Service hiring policy, this decision 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.

With respect to administration, we continue to see numerous mistakes occurring across all categories with the most errors occurring in the short-listing, and interviewing and testing stages. The majority of errors were caused by simple oversights that resulted in applicants or candidates being incorrectly advanced or eliminated. We also frequently identified incorrect calculation or transcription of points and, in some cases, these errors had serious consequences for the outcome. While it was apparent that most administrative errors were unintentional, they pose a serious risk to merit-based hiring as an unqualified candidate may be appointed and a qualified candidate may be eliminated. There may also be implications for a candidate's career in cases where these errors result in an incorrect final rank order or their elimination from the process. With more care, these mistakes are preventable.

This report was shared with the Agency Head, whose response is attached in Appendix F.

## Summary and Recommendations

Open and transparent processes continued to be an area of strength as does the use of objective and relevant means of assessment. While we also observed improvement in reasonable decisions and equitable treatment of candidates, these areas are where the majority of errors were found. As a result, we found that administrative mistakes, combined with some panel errors in judgement, posed the greatest risk to merit-based hiring. Based on these findings, 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.

There are two recommendations for deputy ministers and organization heads and their delegated hiring managers. These recommendations have been made previously but continue to be relevant based on the results observed for this audit.

1. Review education and experience qualifications prior to posting to accurately identify which are mandatory and which are preferred for short-listing purposes, and state where alternatives may be acceptable.
2. Verify the accuracy of candidate standing at each stage of the hiring process prior to progressing to the next stage.

## Appendix A

### Organizations Subject to Oversight by the Merit Commissioner

(As of March 31, 2021)

#### Ministries

Advanced Education, Skills and Training  
Agriculture, Food and Fisheries  
Attorney General  
Children and Family Development  
Citizens' Services  
Education  
Energy, Mines and Low-Carbon Innovation  
Environment and Climate Change Strategy  
Finance  
Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development  
Health  
Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation  
Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation  
Labour  
Mental Health and Addictions  
Municipal Affairs  
Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sports  
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  
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

### 2020/21 Recruitment and Selection Process Observations

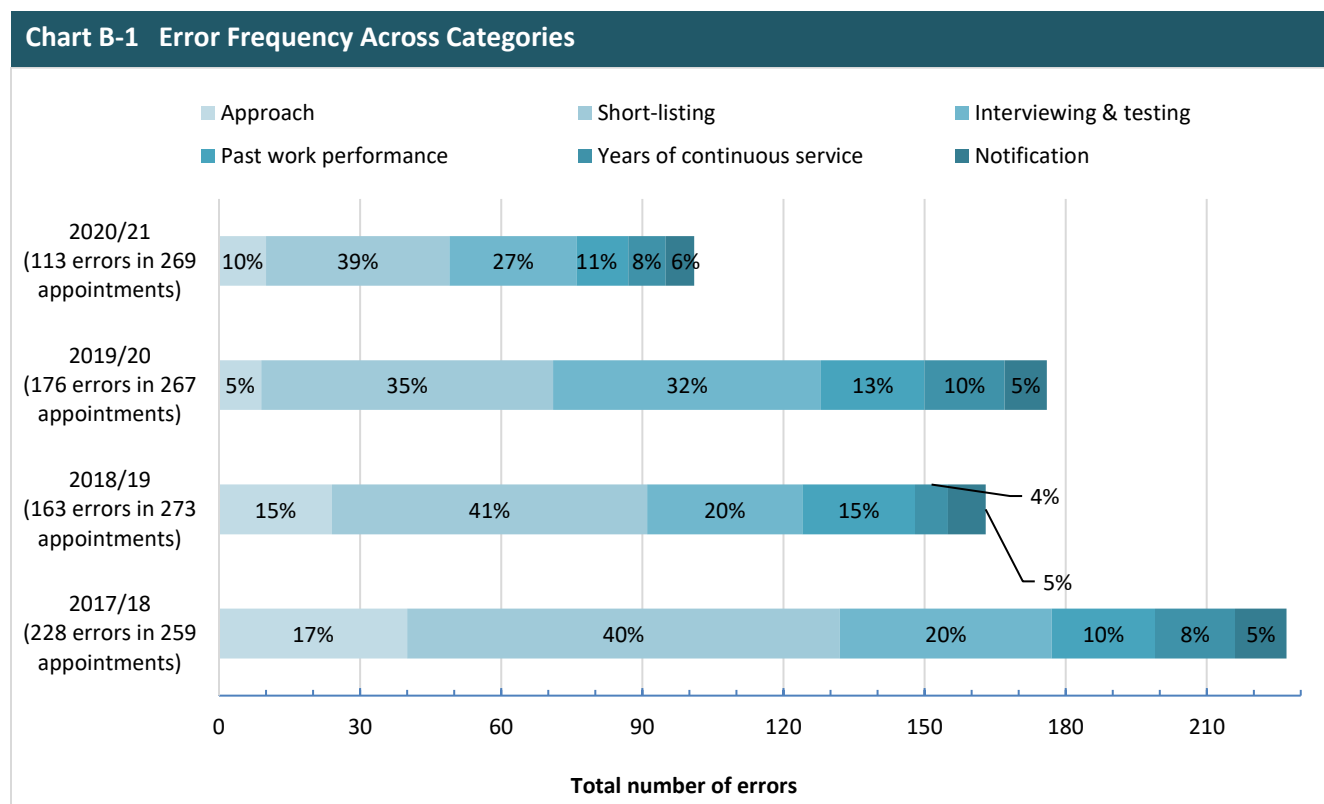
Recruitment and selection processes are usually conducted in a sequential manner. Typically, the process starts with a notice of the opportunity inviting individuals to apply. The hiring manager reviews the applications and determines which candidates meet the minimum requirements (usually education and experience). This is the short-listing stage. The hiring manager convenes a selection panel (the panel) to assess less easily observable qualifications such as knowledge, technical and general skills (e.g., behavioural competencies), and abilities using 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 considers whether the recruitment and selection process was properly designed and applied to result in an appointment based on merit. Where the process meets this standard, the resulting audit finding is “merit”. In 2020/21, the Merit Commissioner found that 191 of the audited recruitment and selection processes were properly designed and applied, and resulted in appointments based on merit. The remaining 78 processes audited had one or more errors, resulting in a Merit Commissioner finding of either “merit with exception” or “merit not applied”. In total, our auditors identified 113 errors in these 78 processes.

Table B-1 provides a breakdown of the 113 errors by the category in which they were identified and shows them as a percentage of total errors.

Table B-1 Errors Identified by Category		
Category of error	# of errors	% of total errors
Approach	11	10%
Short-listing	44	39%
Interviewing & Testing	30	27%
Past Work Performance	12	11%
Years of Continuous Service	9	8%
Notification	7	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100%</b>

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



The Office classifies an adverse audit finding as “merit with exception” or “merit not applied” based on the “impact” of the identified errors on the applicants/candidates or the process. We have identified three different ways in which an error can impact the merit of a selection process. These are:

- **Unknown impact:** we cannot confirm with certainty what effect the error had on the outcome. Typically, these errors occur at the beginning or middle of a hiring process. For instance, when a qualified applicant was incorrectly eliminated from a competition at short-listing, there is no way of knowing if they would have passed subsequent assessments and been offered an appointment.
- **Mitigated impact:** we identified an error with a potential adverse effect but subsequent events or decisions eliminated this impact. For example, when a successful candidate for whom no supervisory reference was obtained, declines the offer, the adverse impact of appointing an individual without considering a critical factor of merit is mitigated.
- **Negative impact:** we identified an error that has an observable adverse effect on the outcome. For example, due to a miscalculation of interview scores, the wrong candidate is appointed to the position.

Where the Office identifies an error (or errors) that has either unknown or mitigated implications in the recruitment and selection process, the Merit Commissioner finding is “merit with exception”. Where we

identify an error (or errors) that has a known adverse impact on the outcome, the Merit Commissioner's finding is "merit not applied".

In 2020/21, 67 (59%) of the 113 errors we identified in our audits had an unknown impact, 40 (35%) had impacts that were mitigated and 6 (5%) had a known negative impact.

To provide a sense of the types of problems encountered in the 2020/21 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 category 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 consistent with the approach.

When evaluating approach, our auditors consider whether the structure of the hiring process is fair, and if enough notice of the opportunity is provided to a reasonable pool of applicants. They assess whether the selection panel is objective, the requirements are clear and relevant, and the standards are reasonable. Auditors also consider whether the final rank order of candidates, offers of appointment and placements on an eligibility list are correct and consistent with the approach. Lastly, they determine if all who applied are accounted for throughout the competition.

### 2020/21 Observations

In 2020/21, we found one or more approach errors in 10 (4%) of the audited appointments.

Number of appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
10 (4%)	11	7	4	0

### Type of Approach

Of the 269 appointments we audited, 253 (94%) were for permanent positions. The remaining 16 (6%) were for long-term temporary appointments. While most appointments audited resulted from standard competitions, there were several appointments resulting from larger processes designed to fill multiple vacancies. Seventeen of the audited appointments resulted from 11 different provincial competitions for positions in a variety of locations around the province. Another 19 of the audited appointments were based on six inventories. There were also 14 audited appointments from four hiring processes where the postings were open over the course of several months and the hiring team assessed applicants in

smaller batched competitions. As these larger processes resulted in many appointments, sometimes more than one appointment from the same competition was selected in the random sample.

A few problems were identified with inventories that had implications for subsequent processes which used the inventory as their source of applicants. For example, in one process, the auditor discovered that the hiring team erroneously placed some unqualified individuals in the inventory. In another process, the auditor observed that the hiring team did not distribute information about an opportunity to all eligible members of the inventory. We discuss these problems in greater detail in Appendix C, Inventory Observations. The batched processes were well constructed and applied.

In 168 (62%) of the audited appointments, the panel established an eligibility list and 48 (18%) of the appointments we audited came from these eligibility lists. In one case, the auditor found that a ministry appointed a candidate from an eligibility list that had expired. There were a few audits where the auditors noted the transparency of the approach would have been improved if the posting stated that an eligibility list may be established or, if the posting clearly indicated how the list would be used. The auditors observed occasions where the list was used to fill permanent vacancies when the posting did not indicate this as a possible outcome.

### *Scope*

Of the 269 audited appointments, in 85 (32%) access to the opportunity was restricted to a limited group of individuals. This is referred to as a restricted area of competition. Sixty-six of the appointments resulted from competitions restricted to BC Public Service employees, with 26 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. The remaining 19 appointments arose from opportunities restricted to members of an inventory which included a mixture of external (out-of-service) and internal (in-service) candidates. Only one error was found related to a competition restriction. In this case, an external individual applied to a process limited to internal applicants. This applicant should have been identified immediately as ineligible for the competition but instead, advanced to the short-listing stage.

### *Key Elements*

A merit-based process requires several key structural elements. The first is a notice of the opportunity, distributed to a reasonable applicant pool, that gives them a fair and informed chance to apply for the position. Our auditors identified several instances where the notice would have been more informative if it included relevant information about the opportunity (e.g., the excluded status of the position, the creation of an eligibility list) or stated qualifications consistent with those in the job profile.

Another required element is the establishment of an impartial and objective selection panel. In one process, the auditor determined that the hiring manager was related to one of the applicants which introduced the potential for real or perceived bias. While a recruiter conducted the short-listing, the hiring manager determined the qualifications and approved the results.

It is also important the panel accurately tracks and accounts for all applicants throughout the process. In a few instances, the hiring managers were unable to account for the status of an individual that “disappeared” either at the initial stage or the end of the process. Case Study B-1 provides an example of this issue.

#### **Case Study B-1: Overlooked Candidate**

A large competition for social services positions resulted in the establishment of several eligibility lists for different locations around the province. After assessments were completed, qualified candidates were placed on one or more lists for locations of their choice based on the rank order of their overall competition score. The auditor observed that one candidate, who had passed all stages of assessment including an assessment of past work performance, was not placed on the eligibility list for one of their chosen locations. The hiring manager was uncertain as to why the error had occurred. From the evidence available, the auditor was not able to determine if this candidate had been overlooked in error or withdrawn from the process.

#### ***Outcome and Results***

In hiring processes, the outcome and results should be consistent with the advertised approach. In one instance, an opportunity was posted as a temporary assignment with no indication that it could become permanent. The auditor found that a few months after receiving an auxiliary appointment, the successful candidate was appointed to the same position on a permanent basis without further competition. Potential applicants interested in a permanent position may have opted not to apply for this opportunity as the posting indicated it was only available on a temporary basis.

A few audit reports identified candidates with tied competition scores at the end of the process. In these processes, initial offers of employment were made to all the impacted candidates so they were not advantaged or disadvantaged by the panel’s failure to break the ties. However, our audit reports of these processes reinforced the importance of breaking these ties with merit-based criteria when rank order is necessary.

#### **Case Study B-2: Positive Organization Results**

When properly designed and applied, the hiring process upholds the merit principle and results in a finding of “merit”. This year, the Office found that 71% of the BC Public Service appointments we audited were merit-based with no errors. Of these, 54% included a note for improvement. We audited several appointments from one organization and found an impressive 88% of their hiring processes were merit-based with no suggested improvements.

#### **Short-listing**

Short-listing is the process of reviewing applications (e.g., cover letters, resumes, application forms or questionnaires) to determine which applicants meet the requirements and will advance for further

assessment. The typical requirements assessed at this stage are education and experience, factors of merit in the *Act*, as well as other similar qualifications such as professional designations, certifications and licences. These types of qualifications do not require a qualitative or relative assessment – applicants either have the requirement or do not – and are easily identified through application review. Some hiring managers may request proof of these credentials or verify the information through references.

Auditors examine whether the panel’s approach to short-listing is appropriately designed to advance those who demonstrated the minimum qualifications. They review if the criteria are relevant and consistent with the qualifications identified as essential in the posting and/or job profile, and upon which potential applicants based their decision to apply. Auditors also consider if the panel applied the criteria fairly across applicants.

## 2020/21 Observations

Short-listing was the category in which our auditors identified the greatest number of errors. Of the 269 appointments audited, 35 (13%) had one or more errors attributed to short-listing.

Number of appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
35 (13%)	44	29	13	2

All audited appointments but one had a short-listing stage and in 205 (76%) of the audits, panels considered responses to self-assessment questionnaires in addition to applicants’ resumes to conduct short-listing.

The 269 appointments in our random audit sample were the result of 246 separate competitions as the sample included multiple appointments from some of the same processes. Of the 246 competitions, 218 were standard competitions. Of these 218 competitions, 153 were open to external and internal applicants and attracted a range of three to 425 applicants. A median of 37 individuals applied on these processes with a median of 11 candidates short-listed for further consideration. For the 65 competitions open to internal applicants only, the number of applicants ranged from one to 55. A median of eight individuals applied with a median of five candidates short-listed for further consideration. We categorized the remaining 28 competitions as non-standard processes (such as provincial or batched processes) designed to attract large numbers of applicants. The number of applicants for these processes ranged from 12 to 2201.

### **Case Study B-3: A Fair Short-Listing Approach**

A competition for a clerical position attracted over 100 applicants. The posting stated that applicants were required to complete and submit a comprehensive questionnaire to demonstrate how they met the job requirements. It also advised applicants to include all relevant information about their education and employment history including job titles, start and end dates, job accountabilities and any accomplishments. The hiring manager conducted a thorough examination of the questionnaire responses and reviewed the corresponding resumes to verify the information provided in the questionnaire responses. They recorded clear rationales for all of their short-listing decisions based on the job requirements. At the end of their short-listing process, the hiring manager had identified nine candidates who met both the mandatory and the preferred qualifications. Their short-listing approach was a fair and transparent means of reducing a large number of applicants to a reasonable number of candidates for further consideration.

### ***Design and Approach***

Auditors identified several errors in processes where it was apparent that the applicants had been short-listed but there was no evidence of the approach: either of the criteria used or how applicants had been assessed in accordance with it. Without a basis or a rationale for short-listing decisions in these competitions, our auditors could not determine whether the applicants were advanced or eliminated on a fair basis. Case Study B-4 describes an example of this nature.

### **Case Study B-4: Mandatory Qualification not Evaluated**

It was unclear how the panel assessed the posted qualifications in the short-listing process for an information systems position. The posting advised potential applicants of the education and experience required for the position: related post-secondary courses with a minimum of three years related work experience or an equivalent combination of education and experience. There was also a preference for a year of business analysis experience. Based on the short-listing spreadsheet, it was apparent that the panel evaluated applicants' education and business analysis experience. However, the auditor found nothing to show that the panel evaluated applicants for the required three years of related experience or an equivalent. It was also unclear why applicants with limited experience advanced while others with more experience did not. The hiring representative did not provide clarification about these decisions.

A few other problems identified by auditors involved the design of the 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 questionnaires included short-form responses where applicants could indicate aspects such as level of education, or the years of a type of experience. Free text responses in the questionnaires allowed applicants to further explain how they had acquired the qualification. In one instance, the panel relied 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. The auditor identified an individual who indicated they had the required experience in their questionnaire but did not support this claim in their resume. Despite not having the required experience, this individual was placed on the eligibility list. Had the panel verified the qualifications claimed in the questionnaire, this error could have been avoided. Case Study B-5 illustrates an efficient way to confirming applicant qualifications.

#### **Case Study B-5: Verification of Qualifications**

The posting for an excluded manager position outlined the mandatory requirements for the position including experience working with specific computer systems. When reviewing applicant resumes and cover letters, the hiring manager identified some applicants who did not clearly describe how they met the required computer systems experience. After identifying which of these applicants met all of the other requirements, the hiring manager contacted these individuals to clarify their computer systems experience. All but one candidate provided additional information demonstrating that they did meet the qualification, and they were advanced for further assessment. The hiring manager's decision to verify whether candidates truly possessed a mandatory requirement demonstrated both a reasonable and fair approach to short-listing. It minimized the risk of eliminating qualified candidates while ensuring that someone who was not qualified for the position was not advanced.

Case Study B-6 describes another type of problem involving the use of self-assessment questionnaires and point rating.

#### **Case Study B-6: Problematic Short-Listing Approach**

The posting for an administrative position stated that "Comprehensive questionnaire responses will be used to shortlist applicants against the job requirements" and advised candidates to "Ensure your questionnaire responses are complete as your resume may not be used for initial short-listing purposes." The auditor discovered that, contrary to these instructions, the panel conducted short-listing based on the information provided only in applicant cover letters and resumes. The mandatory experience requirements used to short-list were specific (e.g., working in a high-volume environment with numerous competing priorities). Based on the posting instructions and the type of experience required, applicants likely focused on providing the details of their experience in their questionnaire responses rather than in their cover letter or resumes. The auditor found the panel decision to short-list using a different method than they described in the posting was unreasonable and lacked transparency.

Our audits found that knowledge and skills were often used as short-listing criteria. These qualifications, unlike education and experience, cannot be reliably assessed through a review of applications or resumes. As a result, we frequently suggested that the design would be improved by not using these



qualifications. Another suggested improvement was to clearly identify the qualifications mandatory for short-listing.

### ***Application and Results***

The most frequent error identified at this stage occurred when panels decided to change a requirement or qualification that the posting stated was essential. 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 the posting did not state that equivalencies may be considered. When the panel changed their requirements at the short-listing stage, they typically did so to be more inclusive or to allow more candidates to advance. For those who did apply, the auditors found that the panel consistently assessed them in accordance with the altered condition or qualification. However, this decision disadvantaged individuals who might have applied if they had known the requirement was flexible as opposed to essential as stated in the posting.

Another frequent error was inadvertent but had serious implications. In some of these cases, one or more applicants who met the short-listing criteria was not advanced due to an oversight, and in others, the panel advanced one or more applicants who did not meet the short-listing criteria by mistake.

Auditors also identified other, less frequent application errors. In a few competitions, a qualification that was not in the posting or job profile was used to short-list applicants. In these situations, applicants did not have a fair opportunity to speak to this qualification in their application. Case Study B-7 illustrates an instance where the panel used a qualification to short-list that was not a clearly stated requirement.

#### **Case Study B-7: Unclear Short-Listing Requirement**

In this competition, the panel used a specific type of knowledge as a key determinant in their short-listing decisions. Although this knowledge was listed in the section of the posting that described the role and other knowledge and skill qualifications, it was not included in the list of qualifications that individuals were required to “clearly demonstrate” in their application in order to be considered. Further, while the posting referred applicants to an attached job profile for the knowledge, skills and abilities that might be assessed later in the hiring process, the profile did not include either the specific knowledge requirement or the other knowledge and skill requirements described in the role section of the posting. Given the importance of the specific knowledge requirement, it should have been stated in the job profile, as well as clearly indicated in the posting as a qualification to be covered in one’s application. This would ensure that all applicants had a fair opportunity to address it. Additionally, the audit noted that knowledge and skill qualifications cannot be reliably assessed through a review of applications or resumes; however, in this case, the auditor determined that the panel was able to reasonably infer if applicants had acquired this knowledge through their experience.

There were also a few instances where auditors identified that the panel treated applicants inconsistently. 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 to provide a learning opportunity. In another case, the panel was unable to explain how they determined that the successful candidate met the mandatory education and experience when it appeared that they did not.

## Interviewing and Testing

Essential to any hiring process is the assessment of the knowledge and skills (including 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. Panels can use one or more methods (e.g., interviews, tests, practical exercises, presentations, and role play scenarios) to assess these factors and the methods of assessment may be completed sequentially such that only those who pass one type (e.g., the test) may progress to the next (e.g., the interview). Panels typically assess candidate performance on an individual basis in accordance with set standards and relative to others in the competition.

Auditors consider whether assessment methods are well designed and relevant, and if the panel establishes job-related marking criteria (e.g., behavioural indicators, key points, correct responses or essential elements) as an objective basis for marking. They also examine whether the panel reasonably and consistently assessed candidate performance in accordance with the marking criteria and other candidates' assessments. Further, auditors examine scores awarded to candidates and the final rank order to ensure accuracy.

## 2020/21 Observations

Of the 269 appointments audited, we identified 27 (10%) with one or more errors at the interviewing and testing stage.

Number of appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
27 (10%)	30	20	9	1

All but two of the appointments audited in 2020/21 involved an interview. Of the 267 competitions that used interviews as a means of assessment, in 203 (76%) the panel assessed a mixture of knowledge, skills, and behavioural competencies. In 56 (21%), the panel assessed behavioural competencies only. Another seven processes (3%) assessed knowledge and skills only and one involved a suitability interview for the only candidate. With respect to the two appointments that did not have an interview, the panel assessed candidates 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. Most audited appointments (73%) had one or more

methods of assessment, such as a written exercise or presentation, in addition to an interview and mandatory past work performance checks. For the other appointments (27%), the panel used only an interview in conjunction with past work performance assessment to evaluate candidates. The effective use of multiple assessments is described in Case Study B-8.

#### **Case Study B-8: Effective Use of Multiple Assessments**

The duties of the position included scientific and technical responsibilities, as well as the management of staff and financial resources. The panel used multiple processes to assess candidates for the required knowledge, skills and abilities. The first phase of assessment was an on-line technical quiz to evaluate job-related knowledge. The panel invited candidates who passed the quiz to participate in three additional exercises: preparing a topical briefing/information note; attending a competency-based interview; and, participating in a job-related role play. At each of assessment phases, the panel marked candidates in accordance with comprehensive marking guides or the standardized competency interpretive guides. This thorough assessment process, and the panel's consistent application of their marking guide at each stage, fairly assessed candidates carrying out simulated but directly relevant job functions.

#### ***Design and Approach***

A fair assessment process requires some form of job-specific marking criteria against which to evaluate responses in an objective and consistent manner. Case Study B-9, shows an approach to ensuring an impartial assessment. The most frequent error identified by our auditors at the interviewing and testing stage was the lack of assessment standards. In many cases, the auditors determined that the panel did not have marking criteria such as behavioural indicators, ideal answers or key elements, for one or more of the interview questions. In other cases, the panels used a corporate rating scale with generic qualitative or quantitative grades (e.g., "good" or "8/10") to mark responses. While this approach may be simpler, without any description of the substantive aspects of the expected response, there is no common basis for panel members to determine the quantitative or qualitative grade warranted. Further, without such a basis against which to review the panel's marking, it is not possible for the audit to determine whether the assessment of candidates was fair.

#### **Case Study B-9: Reducing Risk of Bias**

In this competition, the panel made a deliberate effort to eliminate potential bias when marking the written assignments. Two panel members marked the assignments after the names of the candidates had been removed and replaced by a candidate number. This anonymous marking approach not only provides an objective basis for assessment, it can also reduce the impact of unconscious bias and supports efforts to increase diversity and inclusivity in the workforce.

Another frequent error involved the design of written exercises. For the most part, the problems arose when the panel chose to deviate from the established marking approach. For example, in one competition, the panel made a last-minute decision to award additional points to a candidate based on

the panel's perception that this candidate's presentation was stronger than others. In another competition, candidates' written exercises were separately marked by two examiners and their scores were averaged to determine a final score. However, in the case of one candidate, a single examiner marked the exercise and this mark was used as the final score. Case Study B-10 demonstrates an inconsistent marking approach where the panel deviated from their plan for assessment.

#### **Case Study B-10: Inconsistent Marking Approach**

The assessment process for multiple technical positions included a practical written assignment consisting of three questions. Given the large number of short-listed applicants, four different panel members marked the completed assignments. The panel members used a quantitative (point-scored) scheme with well-defined criteria associated with each point score. This approach allowed panel members to evaluate the assignments on the same basis and using the same methodology. However, following the individual panel members' marking, the hiring manager reassessed each assignment and scored them on a qualitative rating scheme (high, medium and low). There was no established marking guide or rationale to explain this scoring scheme. Candidates whose assignment scored "high" or "medium" advanced to an interview whereas those whose assignment scored "low" did not. In a few cases, the hiring manager's qualitative score was substantially different than the quantitative score awarded by a panel member. As a result, some candidates with a passing point score but a qualitative score of "low" were eliminated and other candidates with a failing point score but qualitative score of high or medium, were advanced. Further, the original point score awarded to the assignments accounted for 15% of the candidates' overall competition score. Without a marking rationale to substantiate the hiring manager's scoring, the auditor could not determine if the panel was fair and consistent in their evaluation of candidates.

Case Study B-11 provides an example of a thorough marking approach.

#### **Case Study B-11: Thorough Marking Approach**

In a competition for a business analyst position, the assessment process included a written assignment. The instructions for the written portion included terms and conditions for the completion of the assignment, one of which was that any plagiarized, or copy/pasted answers from any source (e.g., the Internet) such that the wording is identical or substantially similar to a publication, would result in a score of zero, or possible disqualification. The instructions also required candidates to sign and submit a form indicating that they had read and agreed to the terms and conditions. The panel developed a comprehensive marking guide for the assignment. When marking candidate responses against the guide, the panel determined that one candidate had copied two of their responses, one from an article and the other from a book, both of which were accessible through a Google search. As a result, the panel eliminated this candidate from the competition. The panel's thoughtful and thorough approach was transparent and ensured that the candidates who advanced to the next stage of assessment were qualified.

Auditors found a few unusual assessment problems. In one process, a candidate's interview was rescheduled due to an emergency after they had already received the questions. To avoid giving the candidate the advantage of more preparatory time, the panel designed a new set of questions for them. However, the new design was flawed as the questions assessed different competencies than those assessed for all other candidates. As a result, candidates were assessed on an inconsistent basis. In another competition, the marking criteria used to assess overall fit was too broad to be meaningful. The panel scored this factor out of ten points based on evidence of a variety of requirements covering education, experience, knowledge, ability and behavioural competencies. Each of these requirements was a distinct qualification on its own and more appropriately evaluated using a single, appropriate question.

Several of our audit reports included notes for improvement regarding behavioural competency interviews. There is no single, prescriptive approach to assessment of competencies in the BC Public Service; however, the general practice for use of these guides is based on the following concepts:

- Behavioural competency levels are a scale of progressive performance with each level showing more complex and challenging behavioural indicators than the previous.
- The applicable assessment level for a position depends on the nature of job.
- Typically, the recruitment level for a position is the standard required for the first day on the job and the target level is the standard required for full job performance.

In most of these noted cases, the panels had developed questions to assess behavioural competencies and used the behavioural interpretive guides to mark responses; however, the question or sub-questions were written in a format that required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge or how they would react in a hypothetical situation (e.g., describe the steps you would take to manage a project). The behavioural interviewing approach is based on asking candidates to describe real scenarios in which they demonstrated the competency the panel is evaluating. Therefore, more appropriate questions to assess competencies would ask for past examples (e.g., "Describe a time you managed a project and the steps you took"). In some cases, panels attempted to assess two or more competencies with one question. A better practice is to explore one competency per question. This provides candidates with a clear opportunity to present an example that speaks expressly to that competency. Lastly, in a few interviews, it was apparent that the panel lacked an understanding of how to set appropriate target or recruitment levels – see Case Study B-12.

Auditors also noted that several processes would have been better had the qualifications assessed, typically behavioural competencies, all been stated in the job posting or job profile. For transparency, panels should ensure that all requirements are described and communicated to potential applicants.

### **Case Study B-12: Use of Behavioural Interpretive Guides**

An interview for a mid-level administrative position included behavioural competency questions. The panel assessed candidates' examples in accordance with the behavioural competency interpretive guides. The interpretive guides are standardized marking guides that provide a general definition of the competency and a scale of four to five levels of progressive performance. For each level of performance, there are behavioural indicators or examples of related behaviours. In this competition, the panel evaluated responses in accordance with the full scale of competency levels, including awarding some candidates points for the highest level of conceptual thinking. While considering the full scale was reasonable for some competencies (e.g., teamwork and cooperation), it was not reasonable for the conceptual thinking competency. The interpretive guide for conceptual thinking notes that the highest level is rarely seen. Its use is clearly intended for specialized or senior managerial positions. The auditor suggested the panel could have improved their assessment approach with a more thoughtful application of the interpretive guide.

### ***Application and results***

With respect to marking, there were some assessments where the panel only indicated who passed or failed, or where they recorded an overall point score but did not indicate how or why they determined the score or the elements for which they awarded points. While these processes usually had established marking criteria, without information about the panel's application of the criteria or details demonstrating why the panel awarded the score they did, the auditors could not determine if the marking was objective and consistent.

As candidates' scores determine relative merit and standing in a competition, it is important that marks are accurately determined and recorded. The auditors identified some appointments where mistakes in the calculation or transcription of scores impacted the results in some way. Most serious were instances where an incorrect score changed the final rank order of candidates, resulted in the advancement of a candidate who should not have progressed, or resulted in the elimination of a candidate who should have advanced. There were also numerous minor mistakes of this nature that had no implications for candidates.

### **Past Work Performance**

Hiring panels conduct assessments of past work performance to evaluate and verify candidate qualifications for the position (confirmation of panel assessment findings, values, standards of conduct etc.). As a factor of merit, the *Act* requires the consideration of past work performance and BC Public Service hiring policy requires at least one reference from a supervisor or equivalent.

Auditors examine if the method of assessing past work performance is fair and includes a supervisory reference for each person appointed and for any employee candidates placed on an eligibility list. They also consider whether the panel objectively and consistently assessed candidates' past work performance and, in accordance with the position requirements, made a reasonable decision.

## 2020/21 Observations

For 268 of the 269 appointments audited, past work performance was assessed through obtaining references, usually using a standard template designed to assess general aspects of performance. In most competitions, the panel assessed past work performance for more than one candidate. In 84% of the processes, the hiring panel assessed performance observations on an overall pass/fail basis. In the other processes, the individual areas of performance were rated on a quantitative or qualitative scale. In 83% of the audited hiring processes, all candidates assessed for past work performance passed. In the remaining 17% of competitions, one or more candidates did not pass this factor.

Of the 269 appointments audited, the Office identified one or more errors involving past work performance in 10 (4%) cases. The errors identified in this category, while few, were varied.

Number appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
10 (4%)	12	5	4	3

### *Design and Approach*

In one hiring process, there was no evidence that the panel assessed this factor for either of the successful candidates. In another hiring process, two employee candidates were placed on eligibility list with only a co-worker reference. There was no supervisory or equivalent reference obtained for these candidates as required by BC Public Service hiring policy. In a few other processes, the panel decided 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 access to recourse (including the right to request a staffing review by the Merit Commissioner) may have been affected by premature notification of their status. To ensure employee candidates received accurate information of their standing at the end of the competition, they must be fully assessed prior to placement on an eligibility list. Case Study B-13 involves a complex process where the panel ensured past work performance was appropriately assessed.



### **Case Study B-13: Meeting Policy Requirements**

This was a complex process where the ministry ran eight simultaneous competitions for supervisor and assistant supervisor vacancies in numerous locations. Many individuals applied to multiple locations and several panels were established to assess candidates. Given the complexity of this initiative, the ministry developed several tracking spreadsheets including one to capture information from candidates regarding their references. The hiring team asked candidates to provide the names of three referees and associated details including the organization where the referee worked, the nature of the relationship between the candidate and referee, the candidate's dates of employment, and contact information. These details were entered into the spreadsheet. Not only did the spreadsheet allow the panel to track candidates' references, it also provided a means of ensuring that the process complied with the policy requirement for a reference from a supervisor or equivalent. As another good practice, the ministry also ensured all panel members received training on assessing past work performance prior to conducting the reference checks for their group of candidates. This ensured a common approach was used to assess this factor.

With respect to non-employee candidates, it is reasonable to defer the assessment of this factor as they do not have the same right of recourse and they may not want their current supervisor to know they are looking for another job until there is an appointment about to be offered. However, in these circumstances, it is important to clearly communicate to the candidates that any future offer of employment would be conditional on the successful completion of a supervisory reference. In a few cases, auditors recommended indicating this conditional wording should be included in candidate notification letters and noted on the file.

In a few of the audited appointments, the panel did not use a standardized approach to assess past work performance for all candidates. Instead, the templates or questions used to gather performance information varied between candidates. As a result, the panel's evaluation of this factor was inconsistent and based assessment of different areas of performance. It is essential that the process verifies the same key areas of performance for all candidates. Case Study B-14 illustrates a consistent approach and Case Study B-15 an inconsistent approach to evaluating past work performance.

### **Case Study B-14: Consistent Method of Evaluation**

At the end of a process for an administrator position, the panel conducted reference checks for four qualifying candidates. The panel contacted two referees for each candidate and all three panel members participated in the calls with these referees. Based on the information provided by the referees, each panel member completed the past work performance template and individually rated candidates against a pre-determined marking scale. The panel then discussed their ratings as a group and arrived at a consensus score for each of the references provided. The panel then averaged the two scores to determine a mark for past work performance. This score accounted for 30% of the candidates' final competition score. Involving all of the panel members in the assessment of past work performance ensured that candidates were comprehensively and objectively evaluated for this factor of merit.



#### **Case Study B-15: Inconsistent Method of Evaluation**

In this competition for a senior technical position, the panel conducted supervisory assessments of past work performance for the three employee candidates who passed the interview; however, they used two different templates to gather this information. The number and type of performance areas covered and the questions were different in the two templates. While there were similarities between some of the performance areas covered (e.g., interpersonal and organizational skills), several other areas (e.g., conflict management, working style and ability to work independently) were only assessed in one of the templates. The panel representative advised that they used a short-form reference template to collect performance information for the candidates known (but not supervised by any panel member) to the panel and a more comprehensive and detailed reference template for a single candidate who was unknown to the panel. The decision to use different templates meant that essential areas of performance were assessed for one candidate but not the others.

Our audits also identified a few appointments where it was evident that the panel asked referees to provide qualitative (e.g., “satisfactory”, “poor”) or quantitative (e.g., “7/10”) ratings of candidates in various areas of performance. Having a referee score past work 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 most of these cases, the audit report included only a note as the panel considered the referee’s scores and used it to determine whether the candidate passed or failed this factor. Where the panel relied on the score provided by the referee in their process, we identified it as an error due to the subjectivity of the assessment.

In another process, the auditor found the panel approach to assigning points was unreasonable. Their approach is described in Case Study B-16.

### **Case Study B-16: Subjective Method of Evaluation**

To assess past work performance for in a hiring process for multiple administrative positions, the panel sought two references for each of the qualifying candidates. The panel used a reference template and asked referees to rate candidate performance on a five-point scale in 10 areas for a maximum of 50 points. Other than the points provided by referees, there was little to no performance information collected. The panel added the two reference scores for a total score out of 100 points for this factor. The panel then combined and weighted candidates' past work performance score (worth 60%) and their interview score (worth 40%) to create an overall competition score. While the referees used the same generic rating scale to assess candidates, each applied it according to their own context including: the job in which they had supervised the candidate performing; their perspective of the candidate's performance, and their views regarding grading. The auditor determined that, given the varying contexts of the referees, the panel's approach to the evaluation of this factor introduced elements of subjectivity and inconsistency into the hiring process. The effect of this approach was amplified as this factor was worth 60% of each candidates' final score and changed the rank order of almost all the candidates. For example, a candidate who ranked 5<sup>th</sup> after interviews, ranked last after the addition and weighting of their past work performance score, and there was nothing of substance to indicate why this individual's work performance was not as strong as others.

### **Years of Continuous Service**

The *Act* requires that hiring processes consider the amount of time that an employee has been continuously employed in the BC Public Service as a factor of merit. The requirements for considering and assessing continuous service differ based on whether the position is excluded or covered by a collective agreement. For example, the BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU) and the Professional Employees Association (PEA) collective agreements prescribe the same set formula for the calculation of this factor at the end of the selection process. For excluded positions, there is no requirement to apply a specific formula or additional points.

For positions that require the calculation and inclusion of points for years of continuous service under a collective agreement, auditors assess if the panel considered it and verify that the formula was correctly applied and calculated. For all other positions where years of continuous service are assessed, auditors examine whether it was done consistently and accurately.

### **2020/21 Observations**

Of the 269 appointments audited in 2020/21, the collective agreement provisions of either the BCGEU or PEA applied in 225 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 227 appointments, our audit identified that 8 (4%) had errors associated with the application of years of continuous service.

Number of appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
8 (4%)	9	0	9	0

### ***Design and Approach***

There were no approach and design issues identified in this year's audit. This may be in part attributed to an established approach for all union positions which is based on the same standardized formula. In addition, the BC Public Service Agency has trained staff who complete the calculations on behalf of many panels.

#### **Case Study B-17: Importance of Years of Continuous Service**

This competition for a natural resource officer position attracted over 120 internal and external applicants. At the end of the assessment process, the panel calculated and added the correct number of points for years of continuous service to employee candidates' scores in accordance with the collective agreement. The addition of these points changed the final rank order of 12 of the qualifying candidates. It is important that this factor of merit is considered and properly applied to ensure that offers of employment and the order of placement on an eligibility list are correct and fair.

### ***Application and Results***

The formula for calculating points for years of continuous service uses the total points available in a competition. Our auditors identified several competitions in which an incorrect competition score was used. For example, in one process the total number of available assessment points was 95 instead of the stated 100 points on the final rating guide. In a few cases, the formula was incorrectly applied. Case Study B-18 describes one of these errors.

#### **Case Study B-18: Incorrect Overall Competition Score**

Near the end of the assessment process for a communications position, it was necessary to calculate years of continuous service. The prescribed years of continuous service formula for positions covered by the BC General Employees' Union is outlined in the collective agreement and calculated based on 10 percent of the total competition score. While the points for this factor were added on to the overall competition scores of most candidates, the audit identified that, for one candidate, the points for this factor were added onto their partial competition score (their past work performance points were missing). The panel representative advised that the panel had submitted the competition results to the BC Public Service Agency to finalize the competition while the assessment of past work performance was still in progress for the one candidate. It is not clear why the panel decided to submit incomplete results or why the points for this factor were added to an incomplete competition score.

There was only one audited process where this factor was absent for a candidate. In this case, the correct points for years of continuous service were calculated but they were not added to the candidate's overall competition score. This type of error has the potential for impacting the final standing of candidates.

## Notification

Unsuccessful employee applicants must be notified of the competition's outcome 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.

Our audits examine if unsuccessful employee applicants, including those who may not be considered eligible or short-listed, are properly advised of the results of the hiring process. Auditors also note where necessary details regarding the 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 impact on the competition outcome.

## 2020/21 Observations

Of the 269 appointments audited, the panels provided almost all applicants with proper final notification. This included the inventories which typically used online notification boards managed by the BC Public Service Agency to notify unsuccessful applicants.

Number of appointments	Number of errors			
	Total	Unknown impact	Mitigated impact	Negative impact
7 (3%)	7	6	1	n/a

## Design and approach

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 eliminated at the short-listing or written assessment stage received interim notification, but did not receive final notification of the competition outcome. In a few other instances, employee applicants who did not meet the eligibility requirements in a restricted competition did not receive final notification. We describe a case related to lack of notification in Case Study B-19.

#### **Case Study B-19: Lack of Notification**

At the conclusion of a competition for multiple administrative positions, it was unclear if all unsuccessful employee applicants were notified of the outcome. The file evidence included offer letters to the successful candidates and final notification letters for candidates placed on the eligibility list issued by the ministry. The ministry had also issued regret letters to candidates who did not pass the interview. However, there were no final regret letters on file for some internal applicants who did not advance beyond the short-listing stage. The hiring manager had moved onto a different position and another ministry representative was unable to locate any additional regret letters. As a result, the auditor was unable to determine if these internal applicants received proper notification of the competition outcome and, as such, their access to the right of review provided by the *Public Service Act* may have been impeded.

There were also two cases where it was noted that final notification could have been improved. In these processes, candidates were verbally informed of their status and the outcome of the process; however, given the legislated timelines associated with the staffing review process, it is better to document the notification.

#### **Case Study B-20: Timely and Customized Notification**

There is no requirement to provide applicants with interim notification of their status during a competition but keeping individuals informed of their progress is a good practice especially in processes that take several months to complete. In this expression of interest for supervisor and assistant supervisor positions, the hiring team was mindful of keeping candidates apprised of their status at various stages in the competition. For example, the panel promptly advised applicants who were not short-listed of their status and provided specific information on how they did not meet the mandatory qualifications. Similarly, the panel provided timely notification to candidates who did not pass the online business skills test or the written component of the assessment process and explained how the panel had determined that they did not meet the required standards. Of particular note regarding the interim notifications was the transparent and informative level of feedback that candidates received as well as the thoughtful tone of the correspondence.

#### ***Application and results***

In a few of the audited appointments, auditors found regret letters that incorrectly advised candidates of their rank on the eligibility list. As individuals may use this information to make decisions about other career opportunities, it is essential that it is accurate. Incorrectly recorded information about eligibility list ranking can also impact careers if a hiring manager relies on the information in the letters and appoints candidates in the wrong order. Additionally, subsequent appointments may be impacted if the incorrect eligibility list information is used by other hiring managers.

Our audit reports included many notes to improve transparency with respect to this aspect of the competition process. The three most common were reminders to: provide the name and classification of

all successful employee candidates as required by the BCGEU and PEA collective agreements; indicate the accurate number of initial appointments instead of using the generic statement that “another candidate will be appointed to the position”; and, where appropriate, advise that an eligibility list has been established.

## Appendix C

### Inventory Process Observations

In 2020/21, the BC Public Service used inventories as a source of candidates for some hiring processes. An inventory is a pool of candidates who have undergone some degree of assessment and are considered at least partially qualified for a specific position or a range of positions, normally at the same classification level.

When the Office selects an appointment for audit that was the result of a competition restricted to an inventory, in addition to auditing the specific appointment, we audit and report on the process used to establish or replenish the inventory. We identify areas of weakness in the inventory audit report, including any issues that could lead to an adverse finding for subsequent hiring processes. The inventory report is sent to the organization(s) responsible for the inventory.

With respect to the subsequent hiring process that resulted in the appointment, we conduct a standard audit of the appointment. If errors or areas for improvement are found, we determine if these are attributable to a weakness in the inventory or in the subsequent selection process. The appointment-specific audit report is sent to the responsible deputy minister.

#### 2020/21 Observations

Of the 269 appointments audited in 2020/21, 19 were made from hiring processes restricted to six candidate inventories. In 2019/20, we audited nine appointments from four inventories and in 2018/19, we audited 22 appointments from 10 inventories. Table C-1 summarizes the inventory processes reviewed in the 2020/21 Merit Performance Audit.

Table C-1 Summary of Inventories Audited in 2020/21		
Inventory name	Number and type of intakes audited in 2020/21	# of audited appointments
Clerical (Clerk 9/Clerk Stenographer 9)	1 replenishment process	6
Employment & Assistance Worker (Community Program Officer 15)	1 replenishment process	6
Court Clerk (Court Clerk R13)	1 inventory establishment and 2 replenishment processes	1
Client Service Worker (Clerk R9)	2 inventory establishments	4
Forest Technician (Science Technical Officer 18)	4 replenishment processes	2
<b>Total Number of Inventories: 6</b>	<b>Total Number of Intakes Audited: 11</b>	<b>19</b>

Inventories typically attract a large number of applicants. In 2020/21, the inventory processes we audited attracted between 78 and 2,201 applicants. As a result, in addition to our standard audit

practice, we observe the tracking and management of applicants and the maintenance of consistent practices across multiple inventory intakes.

Of the 19 audited appointments made from hiring processes restricted to a candidate inventory, six were made from a clerical inventory that the Office audited in the 2019/20 audit cycle. As the inventory had been replenished again since our last audit, we examined this replenishment in 2020/21. We observed that the recruitment team did not verify the experience claimed by applicants in some of their short-form responses to the self-assessment questionnaire. These questions required applicants to select “yes” or “no” from a drop-down menu to indicate if they had experience in various areas such as managing their workload and multi-tasking with limited supervision; mail/correspondence tracking systems; electronic records management systems, and case management. However, the questionnaire did not require applicants to provide a descriptive response that detailed when, where or how they acquired the experience they claimed and the inventory team did not check applicant resumes to verify that applicants had the experience. The absence of a verification process poses a risk to future appointments arising from that inventory as it creates the potential to appoint someone who is unqualified.

Another six audited appointments were made from an Employment and Assistance Worker (EAW) inventory. As with the clerical inventory, the Office audited earlier intakes in 2019/20. In 2020/21, we audited the latest intake. In our original audit of the inventory, reported in April 2020, no issues were observed. However, in reviewing an expanded data set in the 2020/21 audit, we identified discrepancies with short-listing and with interviewing and testing. Specifically, we identified two candidates who did not meet the short-listing requirements but were invited to complete e-skills testing; a duplicate applicant who may have been advantaged by two opportunities to complete the e-skills test; and, four candidates who were incorrectly placed into the inventory and able to apply on subsequent competitions even though they failed the e-skills test. These issues pose a risk to the merit of subsequent processes that rely on the inventory for their candidate pool and create the possibility of appointing unqualified candidates.

Four audited appointments were made from two Client Services Worker inventories. The first of these inventories used a batched application process. The posting remained open for an extended time period and applicants were grouped and assessed in batches based on their dates of application. In total, seven distinct batches of applicants were processed and assessed. However, due to inaccurate tracking, some fully assessed inventory members missed an opportunity to apply on a special posting to fill nine immediate vacancies. This flaw affected one of the three appointments selected for audit. We did not identify any issues in our audit of the second Client Service Inventory and concluded it was well conducted.

The remaining appointments were made from newly created or replenished inventories including one from a Court Clerk inventory and two from a Forest Technician inventory. No issues were identified and we observed that these processes were also well conducted.



## 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 2020/21 Merit Performance Audit found that the appointed individuals met the qualifications specified as required for the position with the exception of one case. In this audit, we made a finding of “qualifications not demonstrated” based on insufficient evidence to show that the individual, when appointed, possessed the required qualifications. During the audit, the hiring manager provided a blank past work performance assessment template but was unable to provide any other documentary or verbal evidence regarding the evaluation of this factor. There was nothing more to substantiate that past work performance was assessed such as the names or positions of referees, rough notes, dates referees were contacted or emails with referees. As a result, we concluded that there was insufficient evidence a supervisory assessment of past work performance, which is required by policy, was obtained for the appointed candidate.

## Appendix E

### Documentation Observations

When the Office randomly selects appointments for the annual merit performance audit, we ask the hiring ministry, agency or organization to provide the Office with a complete copy of the competition file. Ideally, the file is a comprehensive, stand-alone record of every aspect of the hiring process such that, when we audit it, we do not require any additional information or clarification to complete the audit. Our auditors examine the competition file and, in addition to making findings about the merit of the process and the qualifications of the appointee, they assess how well the competition documentation supports the hiring decision, categorizing it as either “good”, “sufficient” or “insufficient”.

For a competition with documentation assessed as “good”, auditors can normally complete the audit based only on the documentation submitted or may need minimal clarification from the hiring manager about some aspect(s) of the competition. In the 2020/21 audit cycle, our auditors determined that 67% (179 of 269) of the audited competitions had “good” documentation. Of these, the auditors completed 62 audits, or 24% of the total audit sample, based exclusively on the submitted competition documentation.

Auditors assess competition documentation as “sufficient” when the details of a key aspect or aspects are unclear but, over the course of the audit, the hiring manager provides information that explains and supports the panel’s process. Auditors also conclude that the competition documentation is sufficient when some documents are missing but there is still adequate evidence that an appropriate process was followed (for example, when the interview notes of one of three panel members are missing but the notes of the other panel members are available). In the 2020/21 merit performance audit, we determined that 19% (52 of 269) of the audited appointments had “sufficient” documentation.

For the remaining 14% of appointments (38 of 269), auditors assessed the competition documentation as “insufficient”. When auditing these files, they found gaps in the documentation for one or more stages of assessment. To complete the audit, they asked the hiring manager or a ministry representative to explain the gap and/or provide additional evidence about the process. In all but one case, the hiring managers provided detailed evidence for the auditor to conclude that the stage(s) for which the documentation was missing was fairly assessed but insufficiently documented. In the one exception, the information provided by ministry representatives was inadequate to resolve the discrepancies identified by the audit.

When we compare the quality of this year’s competition documentation to results in previous merit performance audits, it continues to improve. In 2020/21, the Office identified that the competition documentation was good in 67% of audited appointments. This compares to 62% in 2019/20 and 45% in 2018/19.

Our auditors found documentation issues in all stages of the hiring process. Consistent with previous merit performance audits, in audits where the documentation was found to be either “sufficient” or “insufficient”, the most problematic areas were interviewing and testing, short-listing and past work performance. In short-listing, the most common issue was the panel’s failure to adequately document

the basis for their decisions. In the area of interviewing and testing, the most common documentation problem was poorly recorded or missing marking criteria. For past work performance, the most frequent issue identified by the auditors was the panel did not record the relationship of the referee (current or past supervisor) to the candidates.

As in previous audit cycles, our auditors reviewed some competitions where the individual responsible for the hiring decisions had either moved to a new position or retired. In well-documented competitions, this change did not create any significant challenges for our audit process. However, in poorly-documented competitions, our auditors had to contact a newly-designated ministry contact. This person usually had little or no knowledge of the process and may have needed to dedicate considerable efforts tracking down missing documentation or reviewing the file to try to determine how or why decisions were made. This situation is challenging and time-consuming for both for auditors and the appointed ministry contact. It is also avoidable when a panel comprehensively documents their selection process.

## Appendix F

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



Where ideas work

December 1, 2021

CLIFF #6841

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

Dear Maureen:

Thank you for sharing a confidential draft copy of your 2020/21 Merit Performance Audit Report. I am pleased to respond as the Deputy Minister of the BC Public Service Agency.

Your draft report indicates the public service continues to demonstrate 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.

Over the past year, the BC Public Service Agency has continued to support and promote the public service as an inclusive employer of choice. We aim to continue to expand these efforts in the coming year by actively aligning hiring practices across the public service in ways that are objective, fair, and inclusive.

The data and analysis conveyed in your audit reports will continue to be an important part of informing our recruitment of a diverse and qualified public service that is representative of the people we serve.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bobbi Sadler".

Bobbi Sadler  
Deputy Minister

pc: Inderjit Randhawa, ADM, Human Resources Services and Solutions, BCPSA

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