



# Highlights



## Audit of appointments from collective staffing processes

October 2010

*The Public Service Commission (PSC) is an independent agency reporting to Parliament, mandated to safeguard the integrity of the public service staffing system and the political neutrality of the public service. In addition, the PSC recruits qualified Canadians from across the country.*

### Why did the Public Service Commission conduct this audit?

Collective staffing is now more widely used in the federal public service. Participating in collective processes and creating pools of partially or fully assessed candidates are options that can help managers find qualified persons quickly. A review of Departmental Staffing Accountability Reports shows that collective staffing practices vary greatly among organizations.

The objective of the audit was to determine whether collective staffing processes and resulting appointments complied with the *Public Service Employment Act*. In addition the audit team was to establish how organizations manage collective staffing processes and recognize noteworthy practices. The audit focused on collective staffing processes in four organizations: Canadian Heritage, Canadian International Development Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Statistics Canada.

The audit included a review of collective staffing processes as well as distinct appointment processes that, as a result of one or more subsequent appointments, became a collective process.

### What did the PSC find?

The audit confirmed that, while the definition of collective staffing may vary, the result remains one process to staff several similar positions. Collective staffing processes were used to staff an average of four positions. Collective staffing processes are generally used to staff a variety of groups and levels; however, more than half of those processes were for the following four occupational groups: Clerical and Regulatory, Administrative Services, Program Administration and Economics, Sociology and Statistics.<sup>1</sup>

In almost all collective staffing processes reviewed, the number of persons appointed was equal to or exceeded the number of appointments anticipated. As a result, persons were appointed in all positions to be staffed. Nonetheless, many pools become inactive, given that the number of candidates found qualified and placed in these pools exceeded the number of appointments.

<sup>1</sup> This group has, since June 2009, been converted to the Economics and Social Science Services group, which now includes both the former Economics, Sociology and Statistics and Social Science Support groups.

Though a review of human resources (HR) plans showed a difference in the level of HR planning for collective staffing processes, interviews indicated that planning was a critical success factor for collective staffing. Ongoing communication with applicants was also identified by persons interviewed as a key success factor for large collective staffing processes.

The review of appointment files from collective staffing processes indicated that merit was met in 70% (116 of 166) of appointments. In 28% (46 of 166) of appointments, merit was not demonstrated given that there was insufficient evidence that the person appointed met all of the essential qualifications for the work to be performed. Further, in 2% (4 of 166) of appointments from a collective staffing process, the person appointed did not appear to meet one or more essential qualifications or other merit criteria used to make the appointment decision.

The time required for a hiring manager from initiating to completing a collective staffing process can be significant when compared to the fairly quick turnaround involved for another hiring manager to subsequently select and appoint from a pool that has already been created.

Interviews and the appointment file review indicated that the justification for the appointment decision was a challenge for some hiring managers. In 17 of 166 appointments from a collective staffing process, the justification for the appointment decision was not linked to the statement of merit criteria and, in a further 28, there was no justification for the appointment decision.

The review of appointment information from collective staffing processes indicated that the period of time that elapsed between the priority clearance being obtained and the actual date of appointment was, in some cases, significant. In 38 of 166 appointments from a collective staffing process, the period elapsed exceeded six months and, in some cases, 12 months.

The review of appointment files also found that one of the collective staffing processes limited its area of selection to designated groups. In addition, in 26 of 36 appointment processes, employment equity (EE) was identified as an organizational need. The Audit found that 3 of 166 appointments from a collective staffing process used an EE criterion for the appointment decision.

The audit identified a variety of challenges for subsequent appointments made from a distinct process. The review of appointment files demonstrated that merit was not demonstrated in 28% (10 of 36) of advertised subsequent appointments and in 47% (7 of 15) of non-advertised subsequent appointments. Further, in 3% (1 of 36) of advertised subsequent appointments from a distinct process, the person appointed did not appear to meet one or more essential qualifications or other merit criteria used to make the appointment decision.

For many subsequent appointments made from a distinct process, the information about the advertisement did not clearly indicate how the results of the pool could be used.

The audit found that for some subsequent appointments from another process the position that was not similar to the position advertised that had resulted in the creation of the pool. Further, in 3 of 36 advertised subsequent appointments from a distinct appointment process and in 3 of 15 non-advertised subsequent appointments from another process, the audit found practices that could provide an unfair advantage or preferential treatment to the person appointed.

