



ÉCOLE DE LA FONCTION  
PUBLIQUE DU CANADA  
CANADA SCHOOL  
OF PUBLIC SERVICE



## **EXPLAINING and DESCRIBING 2**

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## **CREDITS**

Development and Learning Technologies Directorate  
Language Training Centre  
Canada School of Public Service

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## **Giving and Getting Explanations and Descriptions**

### **GIVING DETAILED EXPLANATIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS**

#### **PRE 1**

##### Scenario

Several projects are coming up at work. To be considered for them you will have to present and discuss your qualifications in an interview.

Mail to:			
<div> </div>			
From:	Co-ordinator for Special Projects	CC:	
To:	All Staff	BC:	
Subject:	Participation in Special Projects		
Message:	<p>The Committee for Special Projects (CSP) will be implementing several new projects in the next few months. These projects result from the initiatives of different groups within the organization.</p> <p>Two projects have been selected for the first phase:</p> <p>COUNT ME IN! is an outreach program to support social services in the community (the winning proposal in our recent Special Projects contest);</p> <p>A TIME FOR CHANGE is a program to help employees prepare for voluntary and involuntary career changes (proposed by the Employee Support Group).</p> <p>Working on these projects will provide valuable experience and exciting challenges. You are invited to consider applying for a project of your choice. Project descriptions will be sent in two days.</p> <p>Those interested will meet with the Special Projects Selection Committee to present their applications in person. Meetings will take place over the next three weeks.</p> <p>Two more projects are to be announced next month.</p> <p>Thank you for your past support of these projects, and for your continuing interest.</p> <p>Alan Makosh</p>		
<div>  Send            Cancel            Address            Attach         </div>			
Start		Mail to:	

WORKSHEET

## STUDY 1

Use the following tenses and time relationship words or expressions when you talk about your work history, experience, skills and know-how.

Use the **simple present** tense to talk about activities you do **on a regular basis**.

Frequency adverbs such as **always, often, sometimes** and **never** are used to indicate the habitual nature of these activities.

Use the **present continuous** tense to talk about what you are doing **at the time of speaking**. The words **now, at present, at the moment** are often used or understood.

Use the **simple past** tense for actions **started and completed** in the past. Time words (e.g. 5 years **ago, last year, in 1992**) are often used to indicate when the action occurred.

Use the **present perfect** to talk about:

- activities in the past that you have **done frequently or habitually**
- activities that **began in the past and continue** into the present
- activities that you have **just completed**

**Since, for, recently, yet, already, just** are often used to show these time relationships.

Use the **present perfect continuous** when you want **to emphasize the ongoing nature** of past activities that have a **link with the present**. **For, since, recently** and **just** are often used to show this time relationship.

## PRACTICE 1

Look at the four cartoons and the multi-sentence caption below. Explain why each verb tense was used for "organize". Underline the time related words or phrases that are clues.



I *organize* things all the time.

Tense:

Reason:

In fact, I *'ve been organizing* everyone and everything ever since I was a kid.

Tense:

Reason:

I *'ve organized* both small and large projects in the past.

Tense:

Reason:

Last year I *organized* the best Christmas party we've ever had.

Tense:

Reason:

I *'m still organizing* things now, both at work and in my personal life.

Tense:

Reason:

## PRACTICE 2

### PREPARATION

Work individually.

1. On separate **slips of paper**, write out five base verbs (e.g. work, sleep, go, fight, find).
2. Put your five slips of paper into the **envelope** into which the others in your group or class are also putting theirs. Mix the slips of paper so that no one S's slips are all together.

### PROCEDURE

Play in groups of at least three or play as a class. Take turns going around the group or class, following this procedure.

1. Pick a slip of paper from the envelope.
2. Read the verb written on the paper you selected from the envelope and make up a sentence using this verb, one of the time words from STUDY 1 *and* the appropriate verb tense.
3. You will earn points according to the scoring system you and your group or class have established. (See Scoring below.)
4. At the end of your turn, put the slip of paper you chose back into the envelope for the next player's turn.
5. If you pick the same verb as a previous player, you must use a different time word and tense. Should you use a tense or time word already used you will receive a penalty.

### SCORING

Make up or choose a system to score the game such as:

- Two points for the correct use of tense and time word
- One bonus point each for:
  - a long sentence (i.e. over an agreed minimum number of words)
  - an imaginative sentence
  - a humorous sentence
- A penalty of minus two points for hesitation and of one point each for the use of a tense or time word already used

## PRE 2 and PRE 3

Your teacher will ask you questions.

## **STUDY 2**

To get more information, you can ask these questions...

1. When you do not understand completely:

**Can/Could/Would you explain...?**

2. To know more:

**Tell me more about...**

3. For even more information:

**Could you expand on...**

4. When you want an example:

**Can you give me** an example?

5. When you want specific information:

**Who/What/When/Where/Why** (exactly)...?

**How many / How much / How long / How far...?**

Add any expressions which you use to appropriate parts of the list.

### **STUDY 3**

To get clarification, use these expressions:

**Do you mean (+ paraphrase)?**

**What do you mean by...?**

**Could you /Please explain what you mean by....**

**I have a question about...**

**I'm not clear about...**

**(I'm) sorry but X isn't clear.**

**I don't understand what\* the problem is.**

**I don't understand why\*....**

**I don't understand X, could you explain that another way?**

*Add any expressions which you use to the list.*

---

\* Note the word order for the portion that follows the question word.

### PRACTICE 3

1. Work with a partner to choose appropriate expressions from STUDY 2 and STUDY 3 on pages 115 and 116 to **clarify** or to **get more information** from the following speakers:

- a. Jean-François: Since 1987, I've worked on several very challenging projects.  
You:

---

---

- b. Marie: It was a community service project...meals for poor kids. Our group worked with the Poverty Action Committee. ...Well, actually, we did most of the work and they just got involved from time to time...  
You:

---

---

- c. Pat: Of course, the success of the project was entirely due to the kind of people we were working with...  
You:

---

---

2. Discuss your choices with the teacher and the class. Note that there are **many possible correct answers**.

## PRACTICE 4

Work with a partner to create some conversations about projects you have been involved in either in your work or personal life. For example, you could describe jobs you had as a teenager or work you have done as a volunteer. Take turns describing a project following this framework:

- A: makes a general statement about the project
- B: asks for more information
- A: gives details/examples
- B: asks for clarification
- A: clarifies...

## PRE 4

Look at the illustration. Which of the speech bubbles has the clearer information? Why?



## STUDY 4

To be effective pay attention to the verbs you choose.

I **was** a clerk.

As a clerk, I **processed** travel claims and **recorded** expenses.

I **did** a lot of different things.

I **installed** computers, **solved** problems, **trained** users, ...

I **worked on** the budget.

I **analysed** costs, **forecast** expenditures and **allocated** resources.

## PRE 5

What do the **verbs** indicate? Why could these **verbs** be useful to you?



"When I was a supervisor,  
I **transformed** the workplace and  
**increased** productivity."

## **STUDY 5**

### MAKING AN IMPROVEMENT

increase  
improve  
strengthen  
consolidate  
integrate  
transform  
reconcile  
reorganize  
revise  
restore  
renew  
revitalize  
reduce  
enhance

### MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

create  
design  
develop  
produce  
introduce  
initiate  
institute  
plan  
establish  
originate  
invent  
pioneer  
spearhead  
implement

### TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

assign  
delegate  
supervise  
organize  
oversee  
lead  
chair  
manage  
head  
control

### TRAINING OTHERS

advise  
coach  
train  
instruct  
motivate  
demonstrate  
encourage  
counsel  
guide  
act as mentor

## PRACTICE 5

Each of the verbs in STUDY 5 gives a precise picture of different work activities. Use as many of the verbs as possible to describe your own work experience. First write sentences using the verbs then practise by reading the sentences to a partner. Your teacher will correct them with you.

## PRACTICE 6

Suggest as many ways as you can to solve a number of problems. For each solution include a different verb from among those in STUDY 5.

### PREPARATION

1. Read the suggested problems listed below:
  - The city wants developers to build a high-rise condominium on a downtown site which you and many others think should be made into a park.
  - Vandalism at your local shopping centre has increased. Two rival gangs of unemployed young people are suspected.
  - The staff at your workplace lacks motivation.
  - People new to your neighbourhood have a hard time integrating.
  - New employees are having a hard time fitting in.
  - A hotline for children and teens in distress needs money in order to continue offering its services.
2. Add similar problems to the list.

### PROCEDURE

1. Work with a partner or small group. For each problem write down as many solutions as possible. Each solution must contain a different verb from STUDY 5.

E.g. Your staff is usually behind schedule and rarely meets deadlines.

Possible solutions:

Increase the workforce; reduce distractions; organize focus groups to identify problems; initiate rap sessions; motivate staff to work better together; encourage group spirit by after-hours social events; introduce training to enhance efficiency,...

2. Compare your solutions to each of the problems with those of other pairs or the group.

## Chronological Order

### PRE 6a

"To help listeners follow events you are recounting, use precise words to signal the sequence."

You can use a variety of structures with different time expressions.

### STUDY 6a

<b>Before</b>	the reorganization, I joined the company, joining the company, February,	I was a freelancer. I worked on my own. I had my own business. I was in university.
<b>After</b>	my promotion, a few months, they relocated, relocating, having relocated,	the company changed hands. the company relocated. I left. the company had problems. the company folded.
<b>By the time</b>	the company folded,	I had left.
<b>Once</b>	I've learned EXXTra7, I learn PhoTo+, I had learned	I'll be able to apply for more jobs. I can apply for the graphic artist position. I was able to apply for more jobs.
<b>As soon as</b>	I've improved my skills, I improve my skills, I passed my test I'd passed the exam	I'll start my new job. I am going to change jobs. I started in my new position. I could drive my new motorcycle.

## PRE 6b

Add any words or expressions not on the study page from the board to the appropriate lists.

### STUDY 6b

#### Beginning

First (of all),...  
At first,...  
The first... was...

In/At the beginning,...  
To begin (with),...  
To start (off) with,...

At the outset,...

Originally,...  
Initially,...

#### Middle

Then\*...  
(The) second ...

Next,...  
The next...

Before...  
After...

Later,...  
Some time later,...  
A week later,...  
When\*\* ...  
At this/that point,...

As soon as...  
Once...

Just as...  
At the same time,...  
Simultaneously,...

By the time...  
Eventually...

#### End

Finally,...  
Ultimately,...  
Last,...  
Lastly,...

In/At the end,...  
To end,...  
To finish,...

At last,...  
The last (thing I want to say/add is)...

\* **Then** gives only general information about the sequence of events. When you wish to be more precise, use precise expressions such as **after two years, two years later**.

\*\* **When** gives only general information about the time relationships between events. Compare these two sentences:

**When** I arrived at work, the fire alarm went off.

**Just as** I arrived at work, the fire alarm went off.

The second sentence is more precise. It tells us the exact moment the fire alarm went off.

PRACTICE 7

- A. Read the sentences below.
- a. I won the lottery; then I quit my job.
  - b. After I won the lottery, I quit my job.
  - c. As soon as I won the lottery, I quit my job.
  - d. Once I'd won the lottery, I quit my job.
  - e. When I won the lottery, I quit my job.

First, put the time words in order from most to least precise.

Next, match the meaning of the sentences above to the ones below.

**NOTE:** Several answers may be possible.

- 1. I found out I had won the 10-million-dollar lottery on Monday morning at 10:30. I quit my job at 10:35. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. I won the lottery on Monday morning. I quit my job on Monday afternoon. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. I won the lottery on Monday morning. I quit my job a week later. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. I won the lottery on Monday morning. I quit my job on Tuesday. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. I won the lottery so I quit my job. \_\_\_\_\_

- B. Read these sentences.
- a. I returned from my trip on January 3 and I started job-hunting on January 4.
  - b. I returned from my trip on January 3 and I started job-hunting the next week.
  - c. I returned from my trip on January 3 and I started job-hunting in April.
  - d. I returned from my trip on January 3 and I started job-hunting in February.
  - e. I returned from my trip in January and I started job-hunting in the summer.

Again, match the meaning of the sentences below to the ones above.

- 1. I returned from my trip on January 3; eventually I started job-hunting. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. I returned from my trip on January 3; immediately I started job-hunting. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. I returned from my trip on January 3; a few weeks later I started job-hunting. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. I returned from my trip on January 3; shortly afterward I started job-hunting. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. I returned from my trip on January 3; much later I started job-hunting. \_\_\_\_\_

- C. Compose a similar set of sentences (a to e and 1 to 5) using the words or expressions from STUDY 6b, SB p. 125. Find a partner, taking turns proceed as in A and B. Practise using past tenses and time words. Your teacher will check your sentences with you.

## PRACTICE 8

### MATERIALS

Time expressions from all STUDY pages in the unit

Pieces of paper on which you will write story starters

### PREPARATION

1. On a piece of paper, write the first sentence of a story plus the first word(s) of the next sentence. The sentence must include a past tense verb and a time expression from the unit.

E.g. It was very dark when I got home last night. Just as....

A car was parked outside my house for two days. When...

Yesterday, I left my briefcase on the bus. Before...

2. Place the story starters face down in a pile on the table.

### PROCEDURE

1. First S:

- Pick up a story starter from the pile.
- Read aloud the story starter chosen.
- Continue by making up one or two sentences which fit in both with the time expression at the end of the story starter as well as with the content.  
(NOTE: The content does not have to be realistic!)
- End the turn with another time expression chosen from the unit. The next player must continue by starting with the time expression.

2. Successive Ss:

- Take turns continuing the story in the same way. Each contribution, except the very last one, must end with a time expression.

## PRACTICE 9

Make up stories about the people and/or things pictured on the next three pages.

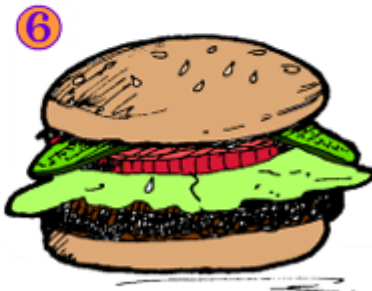
### MATERIALS

The three sets of pictures that follow

### PROCEDURE

1. As a class, decide how much time will be allowed for looking at and inventing stories.
2. Work alone. Look at the pictures.
3. In the time allotted, invent a story following these rules:
  - include as many of the pictures as possible in the story being made up
  - use past tense verbs; i.e. the story must be about events which happened in the past
  - use time expressions to make the story coherent
  - **Note: the story does not have to be realistic**

Set 1



## Set 2

①



②



③



④



⑤



⑥



Set 3

①



②



③



④



⑤



⑥







**MAXI-ROLEPLAY**  
**PREPARATION: CHOOSING A PROJECT**


**STEP 1**

Look at the two e-mail messages on pages 133 and 134.

1. First, briefly with a partner, discuss the projects which you each could apply for and why you would apply for them.
2. Then, working alone, decide which project you will apply for.

Mail to:			
From:	Co-ordinator for Special Projects	CC:	
To:	All Staff	BC:	
Subject:	Participation in Special Projects - Count Me In!		
Message:	<p>Over 150 entries were received in the recent COUNT ME IN! contest, in which employees were invited to propose ways of supporting social services in the community. The winning entry, submitted by L. Braun, G. Harrison and C. Archambault, has been chosen as this year's outreach project.</p> <p><b>Project Description</b> Between February 1 and August 31, a series of fairs will be held at which volunteers from this organization will present full or half-day workshops in an area in which they have a high level of expertise, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>car maintenance</li> <li>gourmet cooking</li> <li>skiing</li> <li>skateboarding</li> <li>jewellery making</li> <li>swimming/diving</li> <li>word processing</li> <li>motorcycle maintenance</li> <li>computer upgrading</li> <li>playing a musical instrument</li> <li>carpentry</li> <li>model building</li> <li>hair care</li> <li>skating</li> <li>yoga</li> <li>art/craft</li> <li>welding</li> <li>et cetera</li> </ul> <p>Community or social service organizations may apply to host a fair to raise money for their needs. Participants will pay per session. All proceeds will go to the host organization.</p> <p>A committee will be formed to organize and manage the entire project; i.e. contacting community groups, recruiting volunteers, processing applications, scheduling, making physical arrangements, budgeting, planning publicity, handling registration.</p> <p><b>Tasks will include:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) co-ordinating the project activities</li> <li>2) training volunteers in workshop planning and presentation techniques</li> <li>3) contacting and getting commitments from volunteers for different kinds of workshops</li> <li>4) finding appropriate locations with required equipment, facilities, rooms or space</li> <li>5) handling finances: registration fees, cash flow, financial records</li> <li>6) handling promotion campaign for the project: deciding type of publicity to use; supervising preparation and distribution of ads, promos, press releases, invitations, etc.; contacting and meeting with media, community organizations</li> <li>7) providing administrative support: setting up and running applications file and workshop registration system, maintaining correspondence, providing word-processing services</li> </ol>		

 Send  
 Cancel  
 Address  
 Attach

 Start

Mail to:			
From:	Co-ordinator for Special Projects	CC:	
To:	All Staff	BC:	
Subject:	Participation in Special Projects - A Time for Change		
Message:	<p>In the near future, more and more employees will be facing career changes due either to layoffs or to personal aspirations. A TIME FOR CHANGE is a new program to help prepare for the challenges which lie ahead.</p> <p>You are invited to become part of the team who will plan and implement this exciting new program. Your responsibilities will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assessing the need for and interest in such a program</li> <li>2. Establishing the content of the program</li> <li>3. Establishing the format: lectures, workshops, films, panel discussions, seminars, counselling, combinations of these</li> <li>4. Setting the duration: What is the optimum length of the program / of each session? How frequent are the sessions?</li> <li>5. Planning the budget and supervising finances</li> <li>6. Arranging the delivery of the program (Where? Who? How? Equipment needed?)</li> <li>7. Planning the publicity campaign for the program</li> </ol>		

Send  
X  
Cancel  
Address  
Attach

Start

## **MAXI-ROLEPLAY**

### **PREPARATION: DISCUSSING YOUR QUALIFICATIONS**

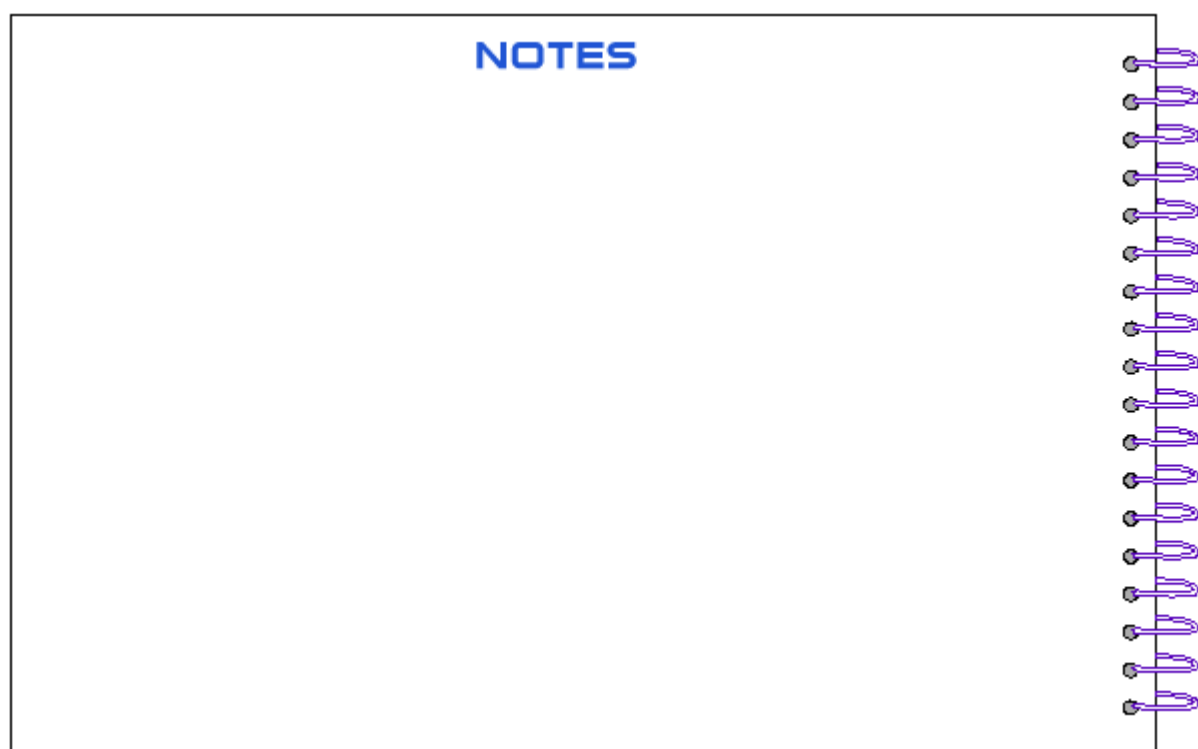
#### **STEP 2**

You will be discussing your qualifications for the chosen project. Before doing this, consider the information below.

1. Think about your work history, experience, skills and know-how. (If you don't want to limit yourself to your actual qualifications, feel free to invent any facts needed.) Consider these questions:
  - how will your background and achievements (real or imagined) enable you to contribute to the project you have chosen (look at page 133 – COUNT ME IN!, or page 134 – TIME FOR CHANGE, or another project suggested by the class)?
  - how many of the project activities could you contribute to?
2. Before you and a partner discuss your qualifications for the projects, also think about your role as listener. As the listener, you can help your partner formulate ideas by asking for more information or for clarification. Use the questions to ask to find out what you want to know from STUDY 2 and STUDY 3.
3. Now work with **a different partner**. Tell the second partner which project you chose and discuss your qualifications for it.

When listening to your partner's qualifications, use the expressions from STUDY 2 and STUDY 3 to ask for more information and for clarification.

4. After the discussion, make notes to help remember what you want to say during the final roleplay.



## **MAXI-ROLEPLAY**

### **FINAL PREPARATION**

#### **STEP 3**

Follow these steps to prepare for the final roleplay:

- review the notes you made (page 136)
- choose verbs which say precisely what you want to convey;
- organize your ideas, using the time expressions and chronological order expressions you have studied.

## **THE MAXI-ROLEPLAY**

### **WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE ME**

Work in groups of three. Each of you will have two roles: as a candidate and as a member of a selection committee.

As a candidate, you will present yourself to the other two group members (the selection committee), explaining both your qualifications for the project you chose and the reasons you should be put on the short list.

As a member of the selection committee, you will listen to the presentation made by each candidate (the other members of your group) and decide which candidates to short-list for each project.

## PROCEDURE

### Candidate

1. Tell the selection committee which project and tasks you are interested in.
2. Present your qualifications: describe your work history, experience, skills and know-how and explain how these will contribute to the project and tasks you have chosen. (Be imaginative and make up details.)
3. Answer any questions you are asked.

### Selection Committee

1. To prepare for the interviews, reread the project descriptions (pages 133 and 134 and the project checklists (pages 139 and 140).
2. Listen to each candidate.
3. Ask for more information or clarification as necessary.
4. Decide whether the candidates could do the tasks they mention. Use the project checklists as a guide.
5. Decide how many other project tasks the candidates could do.
6. Decide whether to place the candidates' names on the short list for their chosen projects.
7. If appropriate, suggest other projects for which the candidates might also be qualified.

## PROJECT CHECKLIST

COUNT ME IN!	CANDIDATES				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>EXPERIENCE:</b>					
co-ordinating project activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
workshop planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
dealing with volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
finance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
promotion and publicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
text processing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS:</b>					
creative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
energetic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
well-organized	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
enthusiastic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
good at dealing with people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## PROJECT CHECKLIST

A TIME FOR CHANGE	CANDIDATES				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>EXPERIENCE:</b>					
project management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
program planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
budgeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
promotion and publicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS:</b>					
well-organized	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
thorough	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
persistent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
good at dealing with people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>