



Results of the Review on the Use of Non-Advertised Appointment Processes

Final Report



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Background

The Public Service Commission of Canada (PSC) reports directly to Parliament and is mandated to safeguard the integrity of the public service staffing system and the political neutrality of the public service. The PSC's Audit Directorate undertakes audits and other oversight activities to inform deputy heads and Parliament of the health of the staffing system.

The [Public Service Employment Act](#) provides for both advertised and non-advertised appointment processes. While the act does not express a preference for either approach, it requires that all appointments be based on merit and free from political influence.

In recent years, the use of non-advertised appointment processes has increased across the federal public service. To better understand this trend, support ongoing policy development and provide insights into the staffing practices of federal departments and agencies, the PSC undertook a review on the use of non-advertised appointment processes.

About the review

The review involved an examination of 448 non-advertised appointment processes from 33 departments and agencies that were previously examined as part of the now published [Results of the Second System-Wide Staffing Audit](#) and the [Audit of Employment Equity Representation in Acting Appointments](#).

As compared to audits, reviews offer greater flexibility, drawing on existing PSC data and streamlining certain audit processes, reducing the burden on departments and agencies and enabling timelier results. While this review provided useful insights into current practices, it was not designed to provide assurance on system-wide compliance.

Main findings

Organizational staffing requirements relating to the use of non-advertised appointment processes

As per the [Appointment Delegation and Accountability Instrument](#), deputy heads must establish direction, through policy, planning or other means, on the use of advertised and non-advertised appointment processes. The review found that in all departments and agencies examined, the deputy head provided direction on the choice of appointment process (both advertised and non-advertised) through established staffing frameworks, policies, directives or guides, with varying levels of detail. For example, most deputy head directions on choice of process included factors, considerations or examples to guide the use of non-advertised appointment processes. A third of these directions on choice of process included a definition or description of advertised and non-advertised appointment processes to guide hiring managers in their choice of appointment process.

While most deputy head requirements for articulating the selection decisions were the same for both advertised and non-advertised processes, a quarter included specific requirements for non-advertised appointments. Specific requirements included documenting the rationale or criteria applied, explaining how it aligns with workforce objectives or identifying factors for selection of candidate.

Reasons for, and frequency of, non-advertised appointment processes

The analysis of reasons cited in priority clearance requests for non-advertised appointment processes showed that, in many cases, a specific reason such as student bridging or the need for highly specialized skills was identified. However, a substantial number of requests listed “Other” as the reason for appointment, which limited the ability to draw consistent conclusions about why non-advertised processes were chosen.

Recent updates to the Priority Information Management System replaced the use of “Other” as a selectable reason with a more specific list of reasons. The review found that many of the explanations provided when “Other” was cited as the reason could now be aligned with reasons on the specific list, while others relating to talent sourcing, professional development or temporary staffing could not be aligned. The introduction of clearer and more specific reasons in the Priority Information Management System is expected to improve the quality and transparency of data on non-advertised appointment processes.

Assessment approach used for non-advertised appointment processes

To evaluate the overall quality of assessment in non-advertised appointment processes, both the number of methods used, and the depth of assessment, were considered. The review found that practices were generally robust, with almost all assessments rated as moderate to strong. Most non-advertised appointment processes relied on a single method, typically a narrative assessment, supported by multiple examples to demonstrate how candidates met the merit criteria, while others used two or more assessment methods, such as interviews or written tests, to add further rigour.

In several organizations, robust practices were observed that enhance consistency in the approach for assessment and completeness of assessment information. These include:

- the use of structured templates with clear instructions and documentation checklists
- criterion-based evaluations supported by concrete examples
- verification of credentials against the statement of merit criteria
- detailed narrative guidance for assessors
- validation of candidate self-assessments by managers

Together, these practices strengthen the overall quality of the assessment and support merit-based appointment decisions.

In only a small number of cases was the overall quality of assessment rated as minimal, meaning that one assessment method was used with few examples supporting merit criteria. This highlights the importance of having assessment methods and practices that enhance the quality and completeness of assessment information.

Other observations on choice of appointment process

The review also observed that, in some cases, appointment processes categorized as non-advertised shared characteristics with advertised processes. For example, certain selection decisions referenced a notice of interest that had been shared more broadly, including through public channels such as social media. Similarly, some appointments made from existing pools or similar processes reflected elements typically associated with advertised approaches.

While such practices can promote transparency and access, they may also create ambiguity about whether a non-advertised appointment was the most appropriate choice of process. These observations highlight the importance of clear communication and a

shared understanding of policy expectations when determining the type of appointment process to use.

The PSC provides a suite of tools and guidance to support departments and agencies in choosing the most appropriate appointment process. Additional information on PSC resources can be found in [Annex A](#).

Looking ahead

The PSC will continue to strengthen its monitoring of the use of non-advertised appointment processes. With new data requirements in the Priority Information Management System and the Public Service Resourcing System which came into effect in 2025, the PSC will be better positioned to report on trends and promote greater transparency in the use of non-advertised appointments across the federal public service. The PSC will also continue to provide advice and raise awareness about existing guidance relating to choice of appointment process and monitor the need for further clarity.

Annex A: PSC Resources relating to the choice of appointment process

Departments and agencies are encouraged to consult these resources when reviewing or updating their internal staffing policies and to ensure alignment with PSC expectations.

- [Appointment Framework](#): outlines the foundational principles and expectations for staffing, including the use of non-advertised processes
- [Appointment Delegation and Accountability Instrument](#): clarifies the responsibilities of deputy heads in establishing internal direction for the choice of appointment process and in ensuring that appointment decisions are properly documented
- [Hiring from pools - Advertised or non-advertised appointment](#): offers situational examples, considerations for use, and documentation expectations to support a common understanding and application across the system
- [Advertising an appointment process](#): sets out key points to consider when deciding whether to advertise, drawing on some practical examples
- [Staffing Scenarios Toolkit \(GCpedia\)](#) (accessible only on the Government of Canada network): presents scenarios where a staffing decision is required
 - Intended to help sub-delegated managers make informed staffing decisions that respect applicable requirements and are consistent with the direction established by the deputy head within their department or agency