Recruitment Toolkit for OCT Grantholders

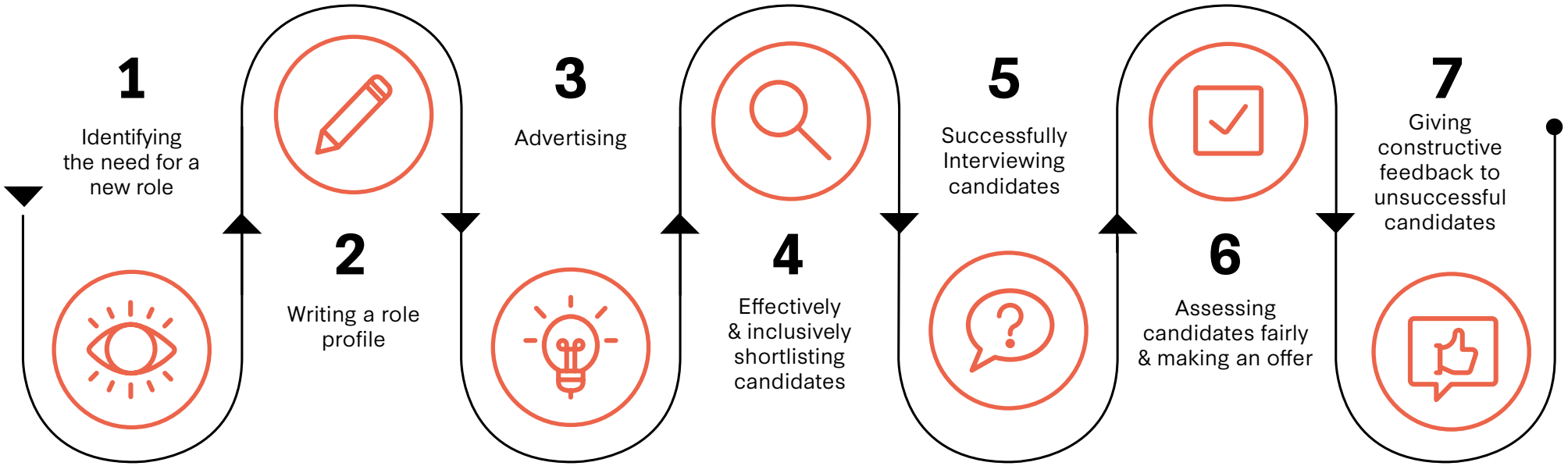
March 2025

The Recruitment Journey

As part of our Funding Plus programme we are pleased to offer OCT grantholders our new recruitment toolkit, which has been developed and adapted in partnership with Bruntwood.

Bruntwood aims to build and foster a highly skilled, diverse workforce, representative of the communities in which it operates in. This is a universal value shared by the VCFSE sector, and so together, we are pleased to share the successful recruitment techniques that Bruntwood practices to produce this.

The toolkit identifies and outlines seven key steps in the recruitment process. Following each step will maximise your opportunity to attract the best candidates.



*Just click on each step's icon to go to its quick guide.

Section 1

Identifying the need for a new role

As a first step, you should consider the values and objectives of your organisation. Do you have a detailed, measurable set of objectives? This will show you whether it is more important to focus on fundraising, community engagement, service user experience or something else. This first step can help guide your recruitment plan.

Next you'll want to consider your current skills base. It might seem obvious, but taking some time to map out your existing team alongside their current and future development plans, in addition to your operational needs, can really help you make sure you bring in the right people to support and drive your organisation's future objectives.

In order to understand if there's a new role requirement in your organisation you should first think about:

- What are your current team members' responsibilities and priorities? (What workflows are your team struggling to get to?)
- What are the current development plans for the team? (Who can and should be able to stretch more to pick up additional responsibilities to support their development?)
- What current knowledge, skills and responsibilities already exist within your team – what are the gaps and how are they currently hindering you?
- Are any of your colleagues ready for their next career step or do they have a development plan in place which clearly maps out their next role?
- Who might have untapped skills or potential to pick up on some of these gaps you have identified?
- Think creatively around how you structure the role. Could it be done part-time or as a job share?

Section 2

Writing a role profile

The role profile is one of the most important pieces of information throughout the recruitment process as it not only helps candidates see if they could be a good match, but also helps them to understand how the role fits into the wider team and organisation.

The role profile also acts as an anchor for you and anyone involved in the recruitment process to come back to, in order to make sure that you are selecting the right person to join your team.

Things to think about before you start writing:

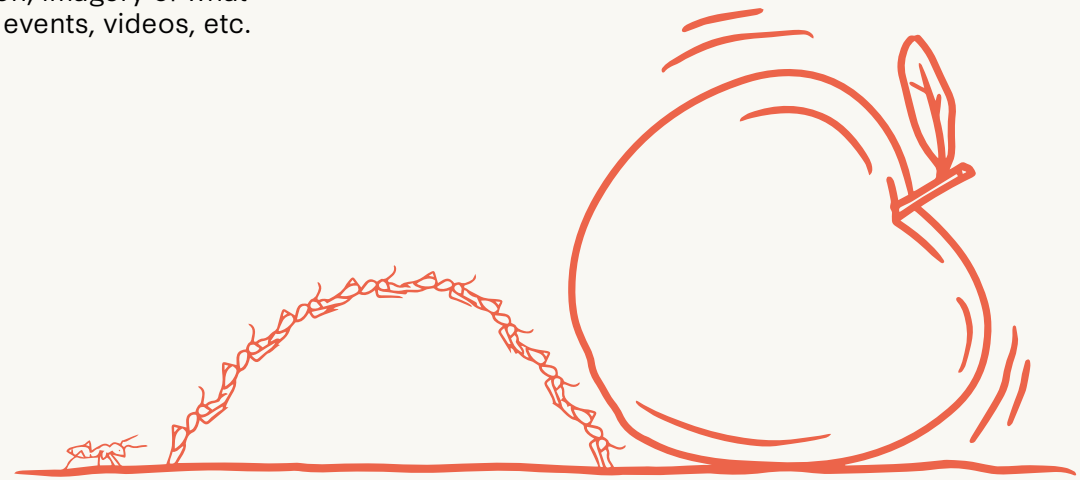
The role profile should be a snapshot, allowing a colleague to understand what they will do in your organisation. It should give enough information to clarify key responsibilities, but also be flexible enough that it doesn't become an overly detailed task list.

The profile should be concise, and allow for that person to adapt and grow their role as they continue to develop their career.

The key is to paint the clearest possible picture of your culture and the role available. You should include any information you have, including: office location, imagery of what the organisation does, events, videos, etc.

Click here to see an example from the Olympias Music Foundation. This has been created in conjunction with Bruntwood, based on their own Role templates. It includes appropriate imagery, organisation details and values.

Click here for a blank template to stimulate ideas for a potential role profile. If using this template, please ensure you're thinking about what key tasks you've identified and specific skills you're looking for to add in.



Section 3

Advertising

Once you've decided on the role profile, it's time to consider how best to advertise it. At this stage you should take thirty minutes or so (either alone, or with any colleagues involved in the recruitment process) to come up with an advertising plan.

You should consider:

- Team structure and key internal stakeholders (such as other team members or Trustees)
- What experience and industry background and sectors you're interested in and the key skills you're looking to assess. (It's a good idea to be flexible about this and no bad thing to be open to candidates from a range of different areas, not just those who have prior experience in the voluntary sector.)
- The D&I composition of your team and whether you've struggled to attract candidates from particular groups before. (It is useful to consider if your recruitment practices are inclusive enough using this **CharityJob Diversity in Hiring Guide.** You will also want to make sure the language is not excluding potential candidates by using this **Gender Decoder.**)
- Consider the unique benefits of working in the VCFSE sector for highlighting in your advertising campaign. (Think about if you can offer greater flexibility in working hours or if you can accommodate preferred working patterns, compared to other sectors. Could the candidate start earlier or later in the day, work compressed hours or job share? Finally, don't forget to include details of the purpose of your organisation and highlight how the candidate could make a worthwhile contribution to the positive impact which your organisation has, since this can be a unique benefit of working in the VCFSE sector.)
- Salary: Be sure to always include the salary for the role in your advert – aside from allowing for greater transparency from your organisation, this will ensure that you're attracting relevant candidates. The salary should be in line with market expectations, at a reasonable level for the role and should pay the **Real Living Wage.** (Some information on average salary levels can be found online, such as at the **CharityJob website**, which published an annual review of average salaries across the sector.)
- Consider possible advertising approaches & agencies. (Consider if you would like to use voluntary sector-specific job boards, such as the **GM Workforce Hub,** specialist agencies, or more general job boards.)

Once you've considered these points, it's time to advertise.
Attached here is an advertising template, with a clear structure for you to reproduce.

Section 4

Effectively & inclusively shortlisting candidates

Shortlisting isn't easy. It's rare you'll get the perfect amount of diverse applicants, with the right skill sets, at the appropriate salary level. However, here are some tips to help you shortlist effectively and inclusively.

1

Reviewing candidates' CVs

Ask yourself:

- Have the applicants articulated their skills and experience in line with the key skills highlighted in the advert?
- If their application requires additional documentation, have they attached this?
- Have they added only limited information around tasks within their recent roles? For example: no description of what they worked on or were responsible for, or very limited explanation of their remit or scope.
- Are any gaps in their CV explained or left blank? Consistent work history with a gap could be explainable, and we know that there are many different reasons why a person might have a career break. However, if there are a number of jumps in a short time period with unexplainable gaps then you might want to consider this.
- Think about the role-specific importance of some elements associated with your vacancy – i.e., for Marketing/Content/ Communications based positions, have the applicants used the correct grammar and articulated their experience in an engaging way?

*Everyone has a degree of unconscious bias, which can lead to imperfect decisions when it comes to hiring. It's important to actively challenge yourselves on how you are shortlisting, and it can be useful to remind yourself what sorts of shortcuts the human brain is likely to take when in a decision making state. Many free resources, such as **Project Implicit from Harvard**, can help you to consider these shortcuts.

2

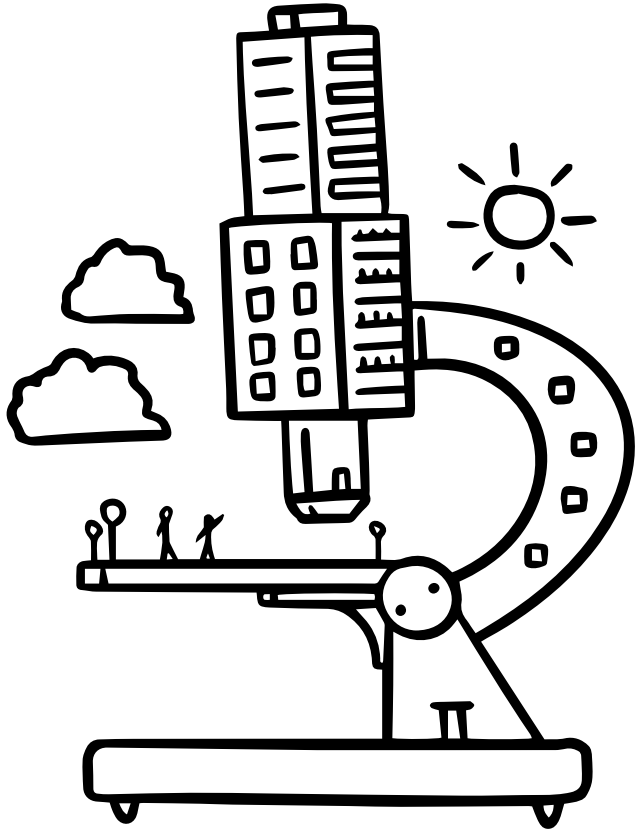
Cover Letter:

It's not always necessary to ask candidates for a cover letter – sometimes the extra work can be a barrier for applicants – you should consider whether or not you require a cover letter to get the key information you need to shortlist. If you've decided that you do require a cover letter then you may want to consider the following when shortlisting:

- Has the candidate researched your organisation and is it clear that they understand it?
- Are their responses generic or have they referenced specifics from the advert/role profile?
- Have they referenced anything about your organisation's purpose or values or outlined that they are interested in your organisation, or your cause, specifically?
- Have they outlined what interests and motivates them to work in the VCFSE sector?

Things to watch out for:

- Don't make assumptions about a person based on their: name, age, where they are from, or what school or university they attended. Just skip straight past that information and head right to their work experience – these are the things which make a person an ideal candidate, not their personal information.
- Don't get too carried away if the calibre of candidates is really high: five or six candidates is the ideal number for 1st stage interviews, with a view to taking three into the second round of interviews, if applicable (more on that in the next section). This is manageable and also a fair level of competition for the candidates. Any more than this is a big challenge on yours and the candidates' time.



Section 5

Successfully interviewing candidates

The interview is a reciprocal process; it's just as crucial that the candidate is able to consider whether it's the right role and organisation for them as it is for you to determine who is the best addition to your team.

Interview structures

Many organisations conduct a two stage interview. The advantage of this is it allows both the candidate and your organisation ample opportunity to get to know each other.

The first stage interview

This can either be face to face or virtual and is used to determine the candidate's motivation and allow them to find out more about your organisation. Virtual interviews can be a particularly effective way to keep interviews close together with more flexibility on time, allowing you to meet a higher volume of candidates.

The second stage interview

Not all recruitments require a second stage interview and you shouldn't complete one just for the sake of it – if recruiting the ideal candidate can be completed in a single stage then that is of course satisfactory. However, if recruitment would benefit from inclusion of different stakeholders or from a presentation or site tour, then you should consider completing a second stage interview.

If you decide to complete one then it should be face to face – a second interview is a good opportunity to give candidates a feel for your organisation's culture and office space (if applicable) and an understanding of the working environment. You may want to include a task to understand whether candidates apply their skills in the right way to complement the role, as well as giving candidates an insight into what they'd undertake in the role, if successful.

If you do decide to run a task, it should be tailored to give candidates a clear vision of the role they are applying for, and should not be run just for the sake of running a task. If you decide to run a task, then see the attached useful tools to help you build it:

- **Task selection**
- **Task building**

Attendees

Think about who is best placed to be on a panel to run each stage of the interview process. You'll want to have two participants at each stage and it's best practice to make the panel as diverse as possible to provide more perspective. You might want to consider involving some of the Trustees or the Chair of your organisation (if applicable).

Please ensure that you take the time to debrief with the other panel member after the interview, to compare notes and discuss the candidates' skills and suitability.

A useful rule of thumb throughout this process is to consider how you'd like to be treated as a candidate. If you were interviewing, you would want:

- A good understanding of what to expect at the interview
- A warm and inclusive experience from the interviewers
- Clarity on how you'll be assessed
- To know who you'll be meeting
- To know when you'll hear back about the outcome

Things to avoid when interviewing

There are some questions you really shouldn't ask in an interview. You might think you are just trying to get to know a candidate better, but they could be interpreted as being discriminatory.

For example:

- You mentioned you have a son, are you thinking of having more children?
- What are your views on Brexit?
- How did you become disabled?
- When are you getting married?
- Or to older candidates - Do you think you would be able to keep up with our fast paced culture?

Also, be wary of assessing candidates based on behavioural norms. For example a neurodivergent candidate may struggle to make eye contact, but that doesn't mean that they lack confidence or aren't passionate about the VCFSE sector or your organisation.

Below you will find an interview questions template – as a jumping off point to help you tailor your interview questions – and a template to help you take focussed notes during the interview.

*__Click here__ to access the interview questions template; you can tailor this to suit the type of role you're **recruiting for.**

*__Click on the icon__ below for a note taking template; you can make a copy of this to use for each interview.

Section 6

Assessing candidates fairly & making an offer

After you've completed the interview process you'll have a decision to make. Sometimes there's a clear frontrunner. Other times the decision can be more difficult.

To make a decision it's always beneficial to reflect on the following:

- Read your interview notes thoroughly and pull out the key points where candidates met the role requirements well, and any points that you think will be valuable and constructive to feedback to the candidate if they're not successful.
- Remind yourself of some of the biases and assumptions you might have in your mind post interview. For example, are you leaning towards a candidate who had a similar career journey to you, or shared your hobbies and interests? Use this as an opportunity to sense-check yourself, and consider whether they are the best candidate for the role based on the skills and behaviours that you need in your team.
- Refer back to the role profile – what were the key skills or experiences you were looking for? Reflect on how the candidates have or haven't demonstrated them. It's easy to get caught up in thinking someone is amazing at "X" when really you wanted "Y".
- Think about how much genuine interest they had in the role. For example, did they research your organisation and ask relevant questions?
- Think about your organisation's purposes and values. Did they demonstrate an alignment to those? Did they demonstrate an interest in – and passion for – the VCFSE sector?
- What are you currently missing in your team in terms of knowledge, skills or behaviours? Was there anyone who you thought could be a good addition to your team's culture?
- Be mindful of making judgments based on perceived social norms.

***A Note on Positive Action**

Positive action means that if you have two equally qualified and experienced candidates for a vacancy, you may decide to select the candidate who is under-represented within your organisation. This is legal, unlike positive discrimination, which is when you choose someone solely because of their identity, despite other candidates being more qualified.

Now you've assessed the candidates fairly, it's important to be effective and timely in your decision making.

An excellent candidate is likely to be in high demand, so don't delay your decision too long and risk losing out on someone brillant! A delayed offer can lead to a candidate's doubt of how keen you are to employ them.

Equally, the candidate will be eagerly anticipating a decision so in the spirit of fairness – and treating the candidate 'how you'd want to be treated' – it's important to give feedback in a timely manner.

Once confirmed, you should call the successful candidate to tell them the good news.

You can then discuss the offer details. If the candidate accepts then you can begin preparations for their start, and finalise the feedback for the other candidates.

Section 7

Giving constructive feedback to unsuccessful candidates

It is best practice to make sure all candidates take something out of the interview process, whether that's something constructive to work on or a positive outcome.

All candidates will have taken significant time out of their schedules to research your organisation and will have set aside time for the interviews and, in some cases, travelled some distance to attend. They deserve to receive feedback and, where possible – and if the candidate is comfortable with this – feedback should be delivered over the phone to allow for a personal conversation which the candidate will find valuable. The target should be to give feedback to all candidates within 48 hours; you shouldn't leave a week or more between the interview and feedback, unless it is for a specific reason.

As a rule of thumb, the longer the timeframe between an interview and feedback the greater the negative impact on an organisation's reputation. With that in mind, it's really important for you to debrief with the other interviewers straight after each interview and, once a final decision has been made, begin preparations to give feedback to the unsuccessful candidates.

Think about tangible reasons for the feedback; constructive and actionable feedback will help the candidate influence a change the next time they interview.

***Click here** for a feedback template form. You can use this to fill in your comments ahead of contacting the unsuccessful candidates

What's next...

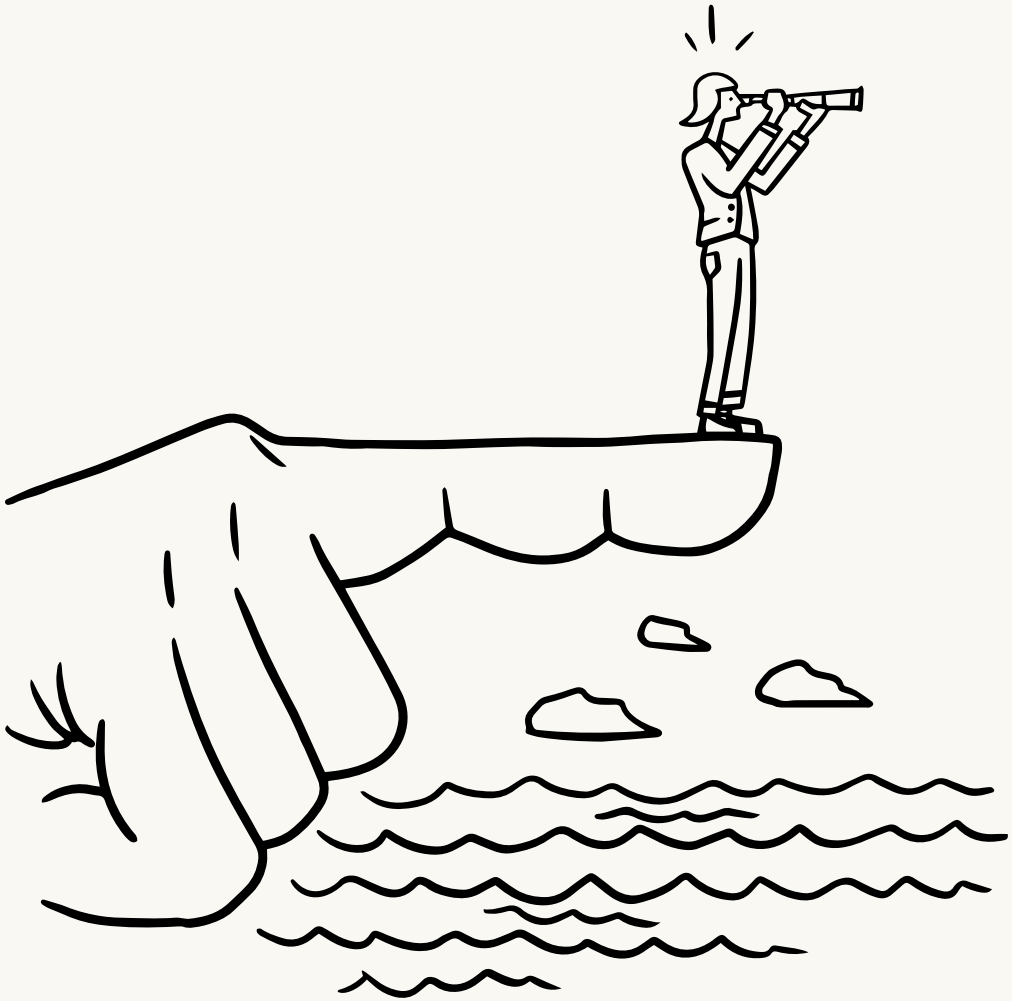
Once you have agreed the offer with the candidate and finalised the start date you can begin preparations for their onboarding.

You'll have an extremely important part to play, to make sure your new starter has everything they need and feels as prepared as possible for their first day.

It's best to keep in contact with your new hire before they start. A call to congratulate them; a text the week before to make sure they've got what they need – both of these go a long way. It's easy to forget how daunting it can be starting a new role.

The first day of any job can be a nervy experience, so making sure your new employee is completely prepared will go a long way towards putting them at ease. Send over anything they need ahead of time so that they feel well briefed. (This could include things like the employee handbook, information about working hours, etc.) Being ready with their induction programme when they start will help prepare relevant contacts in the organisation to help welcome them into the new role.

We hope that this guide proved to be useful, clear and informative, allowing you to tailor your recruitment process whilst not being too dense with information. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact the Trust team.

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