



# Applying for a role within Legal Aid NSW

A “how to” guide for candidates

# Applying for a role at Legal Aid NSW

## Contents

1. Introduction – Working for Legal Aid NSW.....	3
2. Using the guide .....	3
3. Merit – the basis of recruitment.....	3
4. Finding Legal Aid NSW roles .....	4
5. Understanding Legal Aid NSW roles .....	4
6. How to apply for Legal Aid NSW roles .....	5
6.1 Application .....	5
6.2 Profile (personal details).....	6
6.3 Essential requirements .....	6
6.4 Cover letter and targeted questions.....	6
6.5 Resume / curriculum vitae (CV) .....	7
6.6 Referees .....	7
6.7 Attachments.....	7
6.8 Submitting your application.....	8
7. Understanding Legal Aid NSW selection processes.....	8
7.1 Standard panel assessment process .....	8
7.2 Offer – successful candidate(s) .....	9
7.3 Feedback – unsuccessful candidate(s).....	9
8. Talent pools.....	10

# Applying for a role at Legal Aid NSW

## 1. Introduction – Working for Legal Aid NSW

Legal Aid NSW is the largest legal aid agency in Australia, comprising a Central Sydney office and 21 regional offices in metropolitan and regional centres across NSW and a number of specialist services and advice clinics. It was established under the Legal Aid Commission Act 1979 as an independent authority to assist economically and socially disadvantaged people to understand and protect their rights in the legal system. People with disabilities, from people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women and children, Indigenous people and people with mental illness are some of the groups who may experience difficulties when enforcing and defending their rights.

Working in partnership with private lawyers, Legal Aid NSW provides legal advice, information and minor assistance and legal representation to eligible people in many areas of law. Legal Aid NSW also provides alternative dispute resolution services, community legal education programs, and publications on legal issues.

## 2. Using the guide

This guide explains the application and selection processes for those seeking employment at Legal Aid NSW.

While the process can vary depending on the role, it typically goes as follows:

1. Find a role on Jobs NSW ([www.jobs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.jobs.nsw.gov.au)).
2. Create or update your profile (personal details) on Jobs NSW.
3. Respond to the pre-screening questions (as required).
4. Create your cover letter (and responses to targeted questions).
5. Create or update your resume / curriculum vitae (CV).
6. Submit your application.
7. Selection and assessment processes:
  - Standard panel assessment process; or
  - Assessment centre process.
8. Offer – successful candidate(s).
9. Communication – unsuccessful candidate(s).

**NOTE:** This application process can be followed for an individual specialist role; such as a Regional Program Coordinator; or for the creation of a talent pool for common role types such as Legal Support Officers, Solicitors, and Office Managers. Talent pools can be accessed by agencies when they need to fill a vacancy for a common role type.

## 3. Merit – the basis of recruitment

The NSW Public Service recruits employees based on merit. This means that from a field of applicants the assessment panel select the person best suited to the requirements of the role and the needs of Legal Aid, NSW.

Merit selection aims to ensure that:

- All eligible members of the community have a fair chance to gain a job within the public sector
- Selection is based only on a person's capabilities against the requirements of the role

# Applying for a role at Legal Aid NSW

- The best person is selected, resulting in a quality workforce capable of effectively designing and delivering services and programs to the clients of Legal Aid NSW. This ensures that quality services are delivered to the community by a highly skilled and diverse workforce. Accordingly, the community must have fair and equitable access to Government employment.

To do this the assessment panel compare all candidates' skills, experience and abilities against the capabilities, knowledge and experience standards set for the role. The assessment panel uses different assessment methods, such as written applications, capability-based assessments, interviews and referee checks, to collect the evidence required to make a merit-based decision.

The NSW Public Service Capability Framework provides a common foundation for creating and recruiting to roles [www.psc.nsw.gov.au/Sector-Support/Capability-Framework](http://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/Sector-Support/Capability-Framework), which can be supplemented by occupation or profession-specific capability sets.

## 4. Finding Legal Aid NSW roles

Jobs NSW ([www.jobs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.jobs.nsw.gov.au)) is the primary career board for the NSW Public and Government Sector and is where all Legal Aid roles are posted. It lists current vacancies and is the portal for online application and tracking. While some jobs may be listed on other job search websites and /or in newspapers you need to apply for all roles on Jobs NSW.

### Searching for roles

The vacant roles are displayed on Job NSW in descending order according to the date they were advertised. However, candidates can also choose to search by job title, location or work type (for example, full time or part time).

The "quick search" function allows you to search for a specific role using the role reference number, a keyword or through specific locations. The "advanced search" feature can be used to refine the types of roles displayed.

Earmarking advertisements to the "job cart" will group roles you are interested in and separate them from the full list. It is an easy way of identifying advertised roles that interest you so you can quickly navigate to them on you return to the site.

You can also activate the "new job alert" function on your profile. This function triggers an email to your registered email address when a newly advertised role that matches your recorded preferences appears.

Information and tips on using the Jobs NSW website can be found here: <http://www.jobs.nsw.gov.au/how-to-use-this-site.aspx>

## 5. Understanding Legal Aid NSW roles

Depending on the nature of work to be done and whether it is ongoing or for a defined term or project, employment as a public service employee at Legal Aid may be:

- Ongoing;
- Temporary; or
- Casual

Employees are assigned to a role within Legal Aid NSW and can be reassigned to other roles in Legal Aid NSW over time for organisation or development purposes. This approach promotes mobility across the

# Applying for a role at Legal Aid NSW

sector, broadens employees' capabilities and provides new development opportunities. It also allows agencies to respond quickly to changing government and business priorities or community needs.

## 6. How to apply for Legal Aid NSW roles

### 6.1 Application

To apply, candidates must submit via [www.jobs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.jobs.nsw.gov.au) with:

- A covering letter - including a short statement in response to the targeted questions, to provide evidence of experience against required role capabilities, no longer than 2 pages.
- A resume / curriculum vitae (CV) – Maximum five (5) pages.

Understanding the role, what is required and whether you have the right skills and experience are important in deciding whether to apply.

Your application will have a greater chance of success if you follow these principles:

- **Read the advertisement carefully** – All advertisements include a brief description of the role, information on how to apply and a closing date for applications. Keep a copy of the reference number for future enquiries.
- **Speak to the contact person** – After you read the advertisement and the role description, you will know more about the role and may have some questions. You can phone or email the contact person named in the advertisement to help find the answers. Talking to the contact person may also give you a better understanding of the role, whether it is right for you and what to emphasise in your application.
- **Other information** - Get as much extra information as you can to help you present a covering letter and resume with relevant information. You could look at Legal Aid's website, annual report or other publications.
- **Online application process** – The online application process is presented as a series of 'pages' that require information to be completed prior to submitting your application. Each page has a number of fields. All compulsory fields are identified with a red asterisk (\*) and must be completed prior to the page being saved. Applications will not be accepted unless submitted via Jobs NSW (online).
- **Submit your application prior to the closing date** – Applications that are rushed may contain mistakes and may affect the outcome of your application. Give yourself enough time to complete and review your application in advance of the closing date. Please remember that the contact person will only be available during business hours. Do not leave it to the 'last minute'.
- **Technical support from Jobs NSW** – If you are having difficulties submitting your application (for example attaching your documents), please contact 1800 JOB NSW (1800 562 679).
- **Privacy Statement** – The privacy statement on [www.jobs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.jobs.nsw.gov.au) describes how privacy principles are applied, how and why data is collected and how it is stored. It also outlines circumstances when your information can be disclosed.

**TIP: Remember to check spelling, punctuation and grammar, and be succinct. The application itself indicates how well you can communicate and, if written well, can make a positive impression.**

# Applying for a role at Legal Aid NSW

## 6.2 Profile (personal details)

You can create your general profile on Jobs NSW at any time. This include personal and contact information, creating a username and recording a password. Your email address is your unique identifier on Jobs NSW, so you can only create one account per email address.

This general profile can also be created as part of your first NSW Public Services job application. Once this basic information is captured it will populate any future applications automatically, removing the need to retype the same information.

If your contact details change or you would like to include some additional information, you can amend your profile at any time and submit different information for each application if required.

Data is also gathered on subjects such as diversity to assist with workforce planning. Other information, including how you learned of the job vacancy, is also gathered to provide insight into the most effective ways of advertising. Some of this information is provided on a voluntary basis and some is mandatory.

## 6.3 Essential requirements

One of the first steps in the online application process is to be screened for essential role requirements. These are called 'pre-screening questions' on Jobs NSW and typically consists of a series of questions designed to provide information about your eligibility to apply, for example having a driver's licence.

## 6.4 Cover letter and targeted questions

Your cover letter should be short and specific, highlighting the main points of your suitability to the role.

Your cover letter should be no more than two pages in length and include:

- Details of the role you are applying for.
- A brief introduction of yourself.
- A summary of your relevant skills, qualifications and experience.
- Short statements, based on your actual experience, in response to the targeted questions\*.

Your responses could follow the STAR format (by detailing the Situation, Task, Action and Result).

# Applying for a role at Legal Aid NSW

## \* Targeted Questions

The advertisement will ask you to include a short statement in response to the targeted questions. These are capability-based questions directly relevant to the roles' duties and are designed to provide evidence of experience in a similar area. This is done by asking you to describe specific situations and to give actual examples of when you have used specific skills.

**Your responses to these targeted questions and your CV will be used by the panel to determine the short list of applicants to the next stage of the assessment process.**

## 6.5 Resume / Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Your resume (also known as curriculum vitae or CV) is a snapshot summarising your qualifications, experience, skills and qualities. A resume needs to be clear, concise and neatly organised with content relevant to the role you are applying for.

Your resume should include your:

- Education, qualifications and details of any courses or areas of focus that might be relevant to the role.
- Experience, paid and volunteer in reverse chronological order. For each job, include the role title, name and location of employer, and dates of employment. Briefly describe your role responsibilities for each job.
- Special skills, computer skills, achievements, and membership in organisations.
- References (refer to 6.6 Referees).

On Jobs NSW, the “work experience” and education” fields capture traditional resume information electronically.

## 6.6 Referees

Capabilities for a role are assessed at different stages of the assessment process and panels will treat referee information as an equally important aspect of fact finding about your application.

When the assessment panel is making its final decision, information obtained from your referees will be considered together with your application, resume, interview and other selection tools used.

The panel may also ask you for additional referees if they need more information than is available from those you have nominated. You should include your most recent supervisor as one of your referees.

Like the “work experience” and “education” fields on Jobs NSW, referee information can be captured online. Names, contact details and information about your working relationship(s) can all be entered. You can add and remove referee contacts for each application and rearrange the referee order at any time.

**Written references are not required to be attached to your application. Referees will be contact at the end of the process for those selected candidates.**

**NB:** One of your referees should be a current Supervisor.

## 6.7 Attachments

**You only need to attach what you are asked as per the job advertisement such as a cover letter and CV.**

# Applying for a role at Legal Aid NSW

**NOTE:** It is important to note that your attachment library on Jobs NSW contains attachments for all your applications; however, only those marked as 'relevant' will be submitted for viewing with your application.

If you delete a document you will be removing the ability for the assessment panel to view that document and therefore it will not be considered as part of your assessment.

Do not delete any document you until you have information on the outcome of the recruitment action. If you have any concerns, please contact [support@jobs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:support@jobs.nsw.gov.au) for advice before you delete any documents.

## 6.8 Submitting your application

Once all information has been entered into the system, you will be given an opportunity to review your application prior to submitting it. Take this opportunity to ensure all details are correct.

When you have successfully submitted your application, you will receive an email from Jobs NSW acknowledging your submission.

More information [www.jobs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.jobs.nsw.gov.au).

## 7. Understanding Legal Aid NSW selection processes

Once the closing date has passed, the assessment panel sets to work to determine the most suitable candidate(s) for the role(s).

The assessment process selected by the panel will depend on the role for which they are recruiting.

### 7.1 Standard panel assessment process

The standard panel assessment process at Legal Aid NSW includes:

- Review of your application, i.e. your cover letter (including responses to targeted questions) and your resume / CV.
- At least two capability-based assessments\*, one of which is an interview (for temporary roles less than 6 months) or; at least three capability-based assessments, one of which is an interview (for ongoing roles or temporary roles more than 6 months).
- Rigorous 'fit-for-purpose' reference and background checking to verify your employment and performance claims (refer to Section 6.6).

This approach allows the full spectrum of capabilities for the role to be assessed using different tools or methods, and at different stages of the assessment process.

# Applying for a role at Legal Aid NSW

## \* **Capability-based assessments**

The assessment panel will use a range of appropriate assessments to determine the person who has the capabilities, experience and knowledge best suited to the requirements of the role and the needs of the agency. Capability-based assessments are a good predictor of your future performance.

The capabilities for the role you are applying for are located in the role description.

The NSW Public Service Capability Framework provides a common foundation for creating and recruiting to roles [www.psc.nsw.gov.au/Sector-Support/Capability-Framework](http://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/Sector-Support/Capability-Framework), which can be supplemented by occupation or profession specific capability sets, where appropriate.

Assessment methods can vary depending on the capabilities being assessed and may include interviews, work samples, group exercises, role plays and structured referee checks.

### **Common forms of assessments include:**

- **Interview**

The interview is one of the most common forms of assessment. A structured interview allows interviewers to assess candidates in a consistent, standardised manner.

Some questions may be behaviourally based, inviting a candidates to give example of like roles or similar situations from their own experience and how they approached them, what they did and what were the results; as well as any lessons learned.

- **Work samples**

Work sample assessments may be set as a means of gathering information on candidates' experience and capabilities. Work samples can be designed to test a number of skills. For example, a work sample that involves applicants analysing a document and providing a summary of key issues can assess conceptual and analytical ability and communication skills.

- **Role plays**

A role-play exercise is an assessment activity where candidates act out an imaginary scenario that closely mirrors a situation that could occur in the role they have applied for.

- **Job knowledge tests**

Job knowledge tests evaluate technical or professional expertise and knowledge required for specific roles or professions.

### **7.2 Offer – successful candidate(s)**

Once the assessment panel has received approval to employ the successful candidate(s), an initial verbal offer will be made. This offer will then be confirmed in writing.

### **7.3 Feedback – unsuccessful candidate(s)**

Unsuccessful candidates will be advised in writing (via email) and offered an opportunity to receive feedback. This feedback is a useful way to understand the areas that could be strengthened in future applications.

# Applying for a role at Legal Aid NSW

## 8. Talent pools

A talent pool is a group of suitable candidates (whether or not existing Public Service employees) who have been assessed against capabilities at certain levels.

Talent pools are created for common role types at Legal Aid NSW, (for example, Legal Officers I-III). To be placed in a talent pool, an individual must have completed the appropriate comparative assessment and have been selected as having the necessary capabilities to perform the assessed role. Assessment results remain valid for 12 months (i.e. the talent pool remains active for 12 months).

When a vacancy arises and an appropriate talent pool exists, for that particular role, the hiring manager can select a suitable candidate from that talent pool to fill the vacancy. A subsequent suitability interview may be conducted to ensure the candidate fits with the requirements of the organisation, team and role (and/or additional assessment for agency or role specific requirements).

Talent pools may be used for the following:

1. To fill ongoing vacancies
2. To fill temporary vacancies

## 9. Time Frames

Advertisements are usually open for a period of 10 days to 2 weeks. The selection panel will review all applications within the next 2 weeks and advise those candidates selected for interview and assessment in the following 2 weeks. Depending upon the size of the recruitment, namely the number of candidates being considered and the following due diligence of reference checking, it may take another month or so to be advised of the result of the original application.

# Applying for a role at Legal Aid NSW

## 10. Ongoing Support

Legal Aid NSW has adopted this pictorial to describe the life cycle of a Legal Aid career. Legal Aid NSW is committed to provide a conducive environment which fosters support, development and recognition of its employees.

