



People  
Solutions

“Best Practice”  
Recruitment and Selection of  
Indigenous Job Candidates



## Introduction

Many organisations in Australia are working towards increasing their Indigenous Australian workforce. In particular the Western Australian resource sector has had a strong focus on this area. The “Diversity in Resource Sector” survey conducted by the Chamber of Minerals and Energy in 2013 shows that 4.2 percent of the Western Australian resource sector workforce is Indigenous Australians, a result which is higher than the 1.6 percent of the total Indigenous workforce in WA, and the total Indigenous population which is approximately 3 percent<sup>1</sup>.

People Solutions works with many organisations that are committed to employing and developing Indigenous employees. This includes organisations in the resource sector and other sectors such as Education, Health and Utilities.

People Solutions Consultants and our clients have recognised that one of the challenges facing organisations wanting to increase their Indigenous workforce is limited knowledge in how to effectively recruit and select Indigenous candidates. Often the same recruitment practices used for non-Indigenous Australians are applied, leading to mixed results in the success of recruiting the ‘right’ candidates.

This white paper presents key findings from a research project undertaken by People Solutions in the first quarter of 2014. The research project explored what is ‘best practice’ when recruiting and selecting Indigenous candidates and involved two phases.

The first phase of this study involved a thorough review of the recruitment and selection literature, including both Australian publications and international academic studies. The second phase included interviews with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from a wide range of industries,

<sup>1</sup> Figure based on information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ 2011 Census of Population and Housing.

government and research/education backgrounds. Please see the “Description of SMEs” Information Box on the following page for more information about the SMEs who participated in this study.

Our aim was to determine the ‘best practice’ solutions. The definition of ‘best practice’ we used included the following three criteria:

- **Cultural safety:** An environment that is socially, emotionally and spiritually safe for candidates. Where there is no denial or disapproval of Indigenous culture and identity. It is about shared respect, meaning, knowledge and experience of learning together<sup>2</sup>.
- **No adverse impact:** Adverse impact occurs when a decision, practice, or policy has a disproportionately negative effect on a protected group. Adverse impact may be unintentional<sup>3</sup>. For example, adverse impact would occur if fewer Indigenous job candidates than non-Indigenous candidates are successful in a recruitment process because of particular selection process and methods used (such as psychometric assessments or interviews).
- **High predictive validity:** Information gathered about a candidate using a specific selection method that predicts their actual performance on the job. Interviews would be of high predictive validity if candidates who did well in the interview also are high performers once doing the job.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, R. (1999). Cultural safety – what does it mean for our work practice? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 23(2), 213-214.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/humanresources/harassment/definitions.pdf>

### Information Box - Description of SMEs

Subject Matter Experts from 18 different organisations participated in this study with a total of 23 Indigenous and non- Indigenous participants. The SMEs participating worked in the following types of positions:

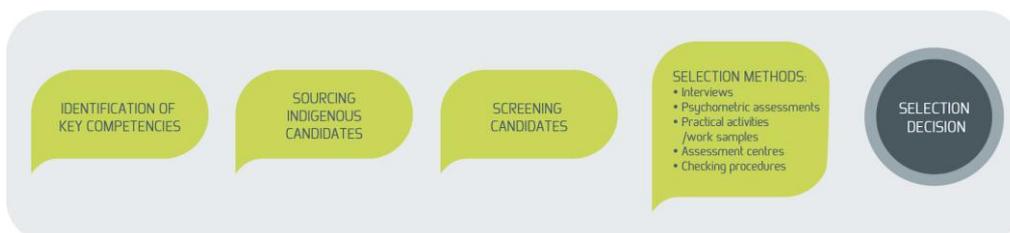
- Indigenous Employment Strategy/Advisory
- Diversity Management
- Human Resource Management
- Recruitment
- Community Development
- Research/Education

#### The industry representation of SME's:

- Resource sector (Mining; Oil & Gas, Engineering firms/contractors)
- Food & Support Services
- Research/Education
- Government
- Independent contractors/professional services

The majority of SMEs were representatives from the resource sector. This was intentional as the majority of the WA Indigenous workforce works in this industry. The interviews focused predominantly on the recruitment of entry level roles, such as Trainees, who are employed in occupations such as Operators and Drivers. The concentration on Operational roles was driven by the fact that 56 percent of the Indigenous employees in the WA resources sector are employed in this occupational category <sup>4</sup>.

### Diagram 1: Steps in the recruitment and selection process.



<sup>4</sup> Chamber of Minerals and Energy's Diversity in Resources Survey, 2013

We would note that the strategies presented in this paper are for Indigenous candidates with a connection to Indigenous culture and practices. The recommendations may not apply to the same degree to candidates from a strong Western culture and family environment.

Also, it is extremely important to recognise the enormous diversity within the Indigenous Australian population with many different clan groups with different cultural practices and protocols, as well multiple languages and dialects.

The recommendations in this white paper do not take into account this diversity within the Indigenous culture, but do identify common themes and strategies. We strongly recommend identifying specific cultural practices when recruiting candidates from different clan groups and tailoring your recruitment and selection processes and practices accordingly.

This paper recommends practices and strategies in each step of the recruitment and selection process (see Diagram 1 below) based on the three 'best practice' criteria previously outlined. The following sections provide practices and strategies for each step of the process.

## Identification of Key Competencies

As with any recruitment process, best practice suggests the first step in recruiting candidates is to identify the key competencies employees need to perform well in a role including knowledge, skills, experience, abilities and personal attributes (this information is often presented in a position/person description). It is important that the recruitment is based on merit and competencies to make sure the successful candidate can actually perform the responsibilities required and is not 'set up' for failure once on the job.

However, our research suggests when employing entry level Indigenous candidates it is important to consider the following points when identifying the key competencies:

- Focus more on attitudes and 'soft skills' (e.g. communication skills, interpersonal skills, conscientiousness, willingness to learn) rather than prior experience and technical skills.
- Carefully consider the relevance of all competencies. Does a particular role necessarily require the person to have a drivers' license, computer skills, or five years' experience?
- We suggest it is also appropriate to use organisational values as selection criteria because the most common organisational values, such as Integrity, Respect, and Collaboration, align well with Indigenous cultural values.

However, we would note that if selecting candidates based on the 'match' to your organisational values, make sure the definition of the values are culturally appropriate. For example, the descriptions and the behaviours defining 'Respect' somewhat differ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. Maintaining eye-

contact when communicating face-to-face is perceived as a respectful behaviour in Western cultures but is in fact a sign of disrespect in certain social situations in many Indigenous cultures.

## Sourcing Indigenous Candidates

### The power of networks

The Subject Matter Experts all agreed that networking tends to be a very effective way to source Indigenous candidates as it helps to build trust and ownership, and takes less time than more 'traditional' sourcing methods such as advertising.

We found that many resource companies' first priority is to source candidates from the Traditional Owners of the area native title has been awarded. They often speak to Elders and other appropriate individuals from the area to let them know that the organisation is hiring new staff and to get assistance with identifying suitable candidates.

However, organisations not working with Traditional Owners also use their networks to source candidates. This could be through community connections, referrals from Indigenous employees and organisations such as Job Services Australia providers that specialise in Indigenous clients; the Australian Workforce Development Centre; Indigenous community groups; job fairs; and Job Readiness programs.

### Advertisement

Some organisations we interviewed use some form of advertised media in conjunction with their network when sourcing Indigenous candidates. They suggested it is important to look outside the mainstream job advertising channels such as SEEK, instead using local and Indigenous media channels including Aboriginal radio and newspapers. Some suggestions included Koori Mail, National Indigenous Times

and GenerationOne's Australian Employment Covenant job board.

When writing the job advertisements, organisations should consider the following:

- Make it short and concise.
- Avoid jargon and use appropriate level of language. The language used needs to be tailored to the 'target' group.
- Ensure the visual design is appropriate. Maybe include Indigenous artwork.
- Include a contact person and phone number, ideally an Indigenous staff member.

### **Information sessions**

Many of the organisations we spoke to recommended using information sessions as part of the sourcing strategy. In these sessions all interested candidates are invited to an easily accessible meeting place where an organisational representative explains the role(s) and role requirements; and tells the participants about the organisation. They suggested an Indigenous staff member could be present to share their experiences. It is also important to explain the whole recruitment and selection process in detail.

It was agreed that the key benefits of information sessions are that employers get an opportunity to meet potential candidates; the candidates get a realistic view of what it is like working for the organisation, as well as a good understanding of the selection process and requirements. It also gives candidates an opportunity to ask questions and get assistance with application documentation, if required. Most importantly, it provides an opportunity for social connectedness where candidates and organisational representatives can start building relationships based on trust and respect.

## **Screening Candidates**

Ensuring there is a simple application process was the key message from SMEs. Many organisations, especially the large resource companies, tend to use an on-line application form. However, it is not uncommon for Indigenous job seekers to not have reliable access to the Internet, and they may have limited computer skills. Therefore, any online application process or form often creates a barrier to employment for Indigenous job seekers.

To overcome this issue, provide the option for job seekers to post, fax or email their resume, as well as the opportunity to complete a hard copy of the application form. Also offer candidates support in completing the application form. Other initiatives include making sure all the questions in the application form are relevant and minimising 'paperwork' required to be completed by candidates.

Organisations participating in this project often conduct a phone screen/short interview as part of their screening process. This is a very effective method as it provides an opportunity for the organisational representative to start building relationships with candidates, explain the role in more detail and assess motivational fit.

It is recommended that the aim of the screening process is to screen candidates *'in'* rather than *'out'*. That is, for the hiring organisation to identify the competencies a candidate can bring to the organisation, rather than competencies a candidate may lack.

## Selection Methods

Once a short-list has been developed based on the screening process, best practice is to utilise a number of different selection methods (such as an interview, assessment centre and reference checking) to ensure a thorough and robust process. A more accurate understanding of a candidate's capabilities, skills and style could be developed through the use of appropriate multiple selection methods.

We would emphasise that it is important to consider the appropriateness of different selection methods when recruiting Indigenous candidates as some may have adverse impact on Indigenous candidates, and/or low predictive validity.

Please see Table 1 for an outline of some common assessment methods utilised in selection. Each selection method is evaluated in terms of predictive validity and extent of adverse impact. That is, how effective it is in predicting performance on the job, as well as the likelihood of observing differences in performance between different groups of candidates, such as Indigenous and non-Indigenous candidates. The most appropriate assessment methods have a high level of predictive validity and low level of adverse impact.

Table 1 shows that some selection methods that are high in predictive validity may also be high in adverse impact. For example, a Cognitive Ability test is known to generally be effective in predicting candidates' job performance, but has a high level of adverse impact. Therefore, candidates from ethnic minority groups are likely to get a lower score on Cognitive Ability Test and be disadvantaged.

Note that the information in Table 1 is based on U.S. research on ethnic minorities and may not fully apply to Indigenous Australians. However, based on the review of Australian recruitment

and selection publications and People Solutions' experience in applying some of these assessment methods, we would suggest that most apply to Indigenous Australians.

The next section in the paper outlines the main selection methods our research suggests organisations should employ as part of the selection process of Indigenous job candidates, as well as key points to consider when applying these methods.

**Table 1: Predictive Validity and Adverse Impact associated with common selection methods (based on ethnic minorities in the USA)<sup>5</sup>**

Selection Method	Predictive Validity	Adverse Impact
Cognitive Ability Tests	High	High
Job Knowledge Tests	High	High
Interviews (Structured)	High	Low
Work Samples	High	Low
Personality Tests	Moderate	Low
Emotional Intelligence Tests	Moderate	Low
Integrity / Honesty Tests	Moderate	Low
Reference Checking	Moderate	Low
Situational Judgement Tests	Moderate	Moderate
Assessment Centre*	Moderate	Moderate

\*Assessment centres involve a combination of the selection methods, such as those outlined above. An Assessment Centre will have high predictive validity and low adverse impact if designed and facilitated according to best practice assessment centre methodology.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Pulakos (2005) *Selection assessment method*; U.S. Office of Personnel Management (n.d.) *Assessment decision guide*.

## Interviews

The research literature suggests interviews are good at predicting how well candidates will perform in a role, as long as they are 'structured'. That is, that the interview questions are relevant for the role and competencies required, and that all candidates are asked the same questions.

Please see Table 2 on the following page for important factors to consider and apply before and during the interview with an Indigenous job candidate.

### Types of interview questions

It is recommended to ask Indigenous candidates 'situational' interview questions. That is, provide candidates with scenarios they are likely to come across in the workplace and apply interview questions that seek to understand how they would respond if encountering that scenario.

Situational interview questions tend to be more effective than 'behavioural' interview questions where candidates have to provide examples how they acted in specific employment situations in the past. Instead of asking how they would behave (situational interview question), the interviewer will ask how they did behave (behavioural interview question). The reason situational interview questions are more appropriate than behavioural questions for Indigenous candidates in entry-level roles is because they often lack work experience and may not have relevant work related examples to draw from.

Also ask questions about the candidate's interests and values to ascertain their motivational fit to the role and organisation.

Considering some Indigenous job candidates do not have experience working for companies with a Western work environment, it is appropriate to

ask questions about their ability and preparedness for engaging in a Western work context. For example, their ability to negotiate cultural and community obligations. A question may be: "How would you manage a situation where you need to take time off to attend to a family commitment, such as a funeral"?

## Psychometric Assessments

Psychometric assessments such as cognitive ability tests and personality assessments are problematic in terms of adverse impact as they are generally developed from a Western point of view.

### Cognitive ability tests

Cognitive ability tests are designed to measure either candidates' general intelligence or mental aptitude in a particular area (such as verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning). As previously discussed, cognitive ability tests are generally effective at predicting job performance, but this mainly applies to jobs that are high in complexity and require a reasonably high level of education and cognitive ability. For this reason, cognitive ability tests may not be relevant for entry level roles.

Research also indicates that cognitive ability tests may have lower predictive validity for ethnic minorities, such as Indigenous Australians, than they do for Western job candidates. A research study in the USA showed that the predictive validity of cognitive ability test scores was lower for black job candidates than white job candidates<sup>6</sup>. Hence, contrary to the longstanding notion that predictive validity of cognitive ability tests applies uniformly across different ethnic groups, it has been shown that the predictive validity is lower for black job candidates.

---

<sup>6</sup> Berry, C. M., Clark, M. A., & McClure, T. K. (2011). Racial/ethnic differences in the criterion-related validity of cognitive ability tests: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 96*(5), 881.

**Table 2: Summary of good practices when interviewing indigenous candidates<sup>7</sup>**

Before	During
<p>Include at least one Indigenous representative on the selection interview panel.</p> <p>Interview panel members must have completed cultural awareness trainings.</p> <p>Create a relaxed environment for the interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid conducting interviews in small closed rooms and placing physical objects between panel and applicant</li> <li>• Hold interview in a less formal setting outside the office environment</li> <li>• Consider conducting the interviews in groups, make it less formal and more conversational</li> </ul> <p>Review interview questions ensuring a suitable level of language.</p> <p>Prepare candidates for the interview so that they know what to expect and come ready:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a pre-interview information session and introduce panel members</li> <li>• If not possible, have either HR team or panel member to call candidates</li> <li>• Provide candidates a 'cheat sheet' of typical interview questions</li> </ul> <p>Provide the option for a support person/family member to attend the interview.</p>	<p>Put candidate at ease in the beginning of interview and focus on establishing a friendly and supportive environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce yourself in a personal manner by first stating your name and highlight any Indigenous links – rather than just sharing your designation and role</li> </ul> <p>Tailor style and pace of questioning according to candidate's comfort level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rather than fielding one question after the other, take time to pause</li> <li>• They may share that they have not done this or that – instead ask questions about what they have done and tease out the transferable skills</li> </ul> <p>Be mindful of cultural communication nuances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Eye contact:</i> They may not wish to maintain eye-contact out of respect (they may also hold their head down looking at the floor)</li> <li>• <i>Shamed:</i> If an Indigenous candidate says that he/she was 'shamed', it generally means embarrassed. They may feel 'shamed' when asked to show themselves as more competent than others</li> <li>• <i>Agreement:</i> They may agree when asked questions or confronted with an issue, even if they don't agree</li> <li>• <i>Yes/No:</i> In some indigenous cultures, brief yes/no responses are more valued than elaborate detailed answers. As such, interview questions may need to be well structured to elicit more elaborate responses</li> <li>• <i>Use of "We":</i> Candidates often use "we" instead of "I" or "me" because of the greater importance of group/community over the individual</li> <li>• <i>Indigenous English:</i> This form of English should not be dismissed as poor command of the language. It is a powerful vehicle for the expression of Indigenous identity</li> </ul> <p>Ensure that selection criteria accommodate experience both in the workplace and also the community as being valid.</p>

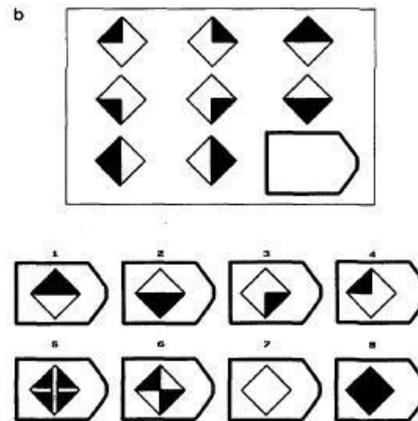
<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations (2003), Department of Health WA (2009), GenerationOne et. al (2013), Oxfam Australia (n.d.), Queensland Government (n.d.), Queensland Tourism Industry Council (2013), University of Melbourne (n.d.).

In addition, cognitive ability tests tend to have adverse impact on ethnic minorities and may therefore disadvantage Indigenous job applicants. For example, research conducted in New Zealand with Maori and European participants showed that Maori scored lower on verbal reasoning test and tests of numerical business analysis than participants of European decent<sup>8</sup>.

Abstract reasoning tests have in the past believed to be culture free/fair and therefore appropriate to use with ethnic minorities as it is a 'language free' test. In an abstract reasoning test candidates are presented with a series of shades and pattern and they have to indicate which option is the next one in the series (see Figure 1). It measures candidates' ability to understand concepts and ideas outside their previous experience and ability to learn.

Although often thought to be culture-free/fair, it has been argued that such tests are actually more culturally loaded than verbal test. Cultural constructs like matrix may be common in some cultures but absent in others, favouring those from the culture in which the test was developed. In addition, researchers have found greater discrepancies between different ethnic groups for nonverbal tests than for verbal or numerical tests<sup>9</sup>.

People Solutions recommends using cognitive ability test with caution and suggest using other alternatives such as the Queensland Test (Q-Test) and numeracy and literacy tests.

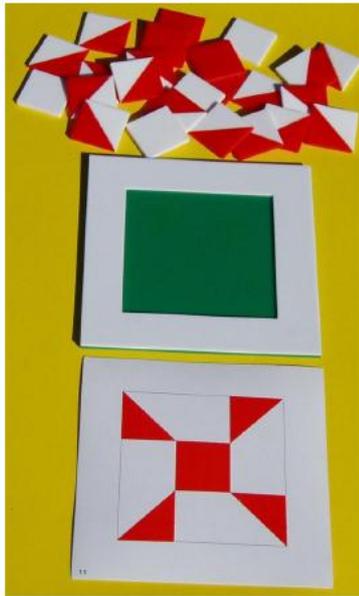


**Figure 1: Example of an Abstract Reasoning test question**

The Q-Test is a language free and culture fair general cognitive ability assessment developed in Australia. It measures candidates' capability, potential, and trainability, and results inform developmental pathways for candidates. The tool has been validated using several samples, including Indigenous Australians and New Zealand Maori, and is being used by a number of Australian organisations in both the private and public sectors.

The test consists of portable coloured beads and tiles with which the candidate is required to construct, manipulate, or recall a pattern (see Figure 2). The administrator use body language and gestures to administer the assessment and candidates demonstrate rather than 'respond'. Although promising, using the Q-Test is resource intensive in view of the individual administration.

<sup>8</sup> Guenole, N., Englert, P., & Taylor, P. (2003). Ethnic Differences in Cognitive Ability in a New Zealand Applicant Sample. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 32(1), 49-54  
<sup>9</sup> Benson, E. (2003). *Intelligence across cultures*; Drew, N., Adams, Y., & Walker, R. (2010). *Issues in mental health assessment with Indigenous Australians*; Lohman, D. F. (2005). The role of nonverbal ability tests in identifying academically gifted students: An aptitude perspective. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 49(2), 111-138.



**Figure 2: Example of Q-Test sub-tests.**

Another alternative to cognitive ability tests are numeracy and literacy tests. One of the reasons Indigenous candidates may be adversely impacted by cognitive ability tests is their generally lower literacy and numeracy skills. When a candidate with poor literacy does not perform well on a cognitive ability test, it is difficult to know whether the low score represents low cognitive ability or limited ability to read. A certain level of literacy and numeracy is important in most jobs, so it would be beneficial to employ literacy and numeracy tests to ascertain Indigenous candidates' proficiency. Once determined, organisations can provide training and support to successful candidates, if required. There are a number of numeracy and literacy tests available, including tests specifically designed for young adults with

limited formal education and/or exposure to testing and assessments.

### **Other psychometric assessments**

Personality assessments assess candidates' preferred style and preferences in terms of work, and as displayed in Table 1 personality assessments generally have a low level of adverse impact. However, some questions in a personality questionnaire may not be culturally appropriate, so it is important to ensure a suitable personality assessment is administered.

Similarly, a safety assessment is often used as part of a selection process, especially in the resource sector. We suggest the candidates' literacy skills can confound the results from a safety assessment, especially if it requires a reasonably high level of reading ability. Once again, organisations must make sure an appropriate safety assessment is being utilised as part of the selection process.

There are safety assessments that assess literacy level before the safety questions are presented to candidates. Also some organisations we spoke to have developed their own basic visual and/or oral safety assessments to gain a general understanding of Indigenous candidates' knowledge of safety signs and labels.

### **Administration of psychometric assessments**

As many Indigenous candidates are unfamiliar with psychometric assessments and tests in general, it is essential to ensure a culturally safe assessment process and environment. It is important to provide candidates with detailed information about the assessments, the process and how the information will be used. It is preferable that this information is shared face-to-face or over the phone if face-to-face communication is not possible. It is also important to spend time with the candidate prior

to starting the assessments to build rapport and put them at ease.

If possible, it is recommended to administer any form of assessment using paper-and-pencil rather than computer based assessments. Computer literacy may affect the candidates' comfort level and performance, and candidates are likely to perceive less time pressure when administer in a paper-and-pencil format (i.e. the clock is not counting down in the background).

## Practical Activities/Work Samples

Practical activities tend to be an effective selection method for Indigenous job candidates. Activities require candidates to work in groups to solve a problem or complete a task, such as building a tower with specific measurements using materials provided. These type of activities tend to 'bring out' candidates' natural behaviours and provide information about their interpersonal, communication and problem solving styles.

Using activities that require candidates to complete a task they would actually perform on the job, such as operating a truck or identifying safety hazards, would be a highly relevant and effective method of selection, but this is often difficult to implement in practice.

In designing and using practical activities, we recommend:

- Involve an appropriate Indigenous person in the design to make sure it is culturally appropriate.
- Ensure the activity does not require a high level of reading ability.
- Present the instructions in ways that allow for different learning styles.
- In a group activity, make sure you account for 'avoidance relationships' when allocating candidates into different groups.

- If the groups are required to 'report back' to the wider group as part of the activity, let the group decide who will speak for the group to avoid putting anyone 'on the spot'.

## Assessment Centres

Many of the Subject Matter Experts we spoke to use an assessment centre methodology as part of their selection process for entry level Indigenous roles and found it to be an effective process.

An assessment centre is a structured and objective method of assessing candidates' match to the competencies required for a role. Assessment centres involve a group of candidates participating in a number of exercises and assessments (such as interviews, practical activities, in-basket exercise and psychometric assessments), and the candidates performance in these exercises are evaluated against the defined competencies, by Assessors.

An assessment centre is a multi-method approach which means that it is measuring candidates' behaviours in more than one situation and by more than one Assessor. Therefore, it is more robust and objective than most other selection methods and provides an organisation with multiple opportunities to understand what candidates can do and where their strengths and development areas are. An assessment centre can run for a period of just a couple of hours to 5 days.

The literature review supported the view that assessment centres are generally effective to assess job candidates, especially when it includes the use of practical activities and for jobs that are less complex in nature. To make sure an assessment centre has a high level of predictive validity and low level of adverse impact, it is imperative that the assessment

centre is designed and facilitated in accordance with best practice assessment centre methodology. For example, the exercises that are included in the assessment centre should be designed to assess competencies that are linked to the successful performance in a job, the practical activities must elicit relevant behaviours, and the Assessors must be adequately trained.

People Solutions' research suggests that when running an assessment centre for Indigenous Australians it is important to consider the following to enhance candidates' feeling of cultural safety:

- **Information prior to the assessment centre:** Provide candidates with detailed information about the assessment centre prior to the assessment centre day. They need information explaining all aspects of the process such as what an assessment centre is, the types of exercises involved, what they should be wearing etc. Sharing this information face-to-face or over the phone helps in building relationships and trust with candidates.
- **Trained Assessors:** Ensure all Assessors have attended Assessors and Cultural Awareness training. Use Indigenous Assessors if possible.
- **'Milling around':** Start the assessment centre with an informal 'meet & greet' session. The purpose of this is to put candidates at ease and give them an opportunity to get to know each other and the Assessors. This session may include an 'ice-breaker' activity to break down anxiety or feelings of stress. When the Assessors introduce themselves focus first on who they are and where they are from, rather than their job title.

- **Showcase the organisation:** Provide information about the role and organisation. Here is an opportunity to inform the candidates what it is like working for the organisation, the type of support available and present the 'Reconciliation Action Plan', if available.
- **Welcome/Acknowledgement of Country:** Include a 'Welcome or Acknowledgement of Country' as part of the introduction to the day.
- **Informal interactions:** Provide multiple opportunities for informal interaction between candidates and Assessors throughout the day, such as lunch or morning/afternoon tea breaks.
- **Venue:** Use a suitable venue for the assessment centre ideally in the local community or with Indigenous artwork and flags.

## Checking Procedures

All organisations we met with include checking procedures such as reference checks, medical and drug/alcohol tests. There were no recommendations about undertaking these types of checks differently when recruiting Indigenous candidates.

## Selection Decision

Once the selection process has been completed and it is time to make the decision who to offer the job, our SMEs suggested to consider the following:

- Put more emphasis on candidates' capabilities in terms of attitudes and 'soft' skills rather than work experience and technical skills.
- Recruiters need to feel confident to have robust conversations with hiring managers regarding which candidate to hire in order

to minimise biases the hiring managers may have. That is, recruiters need to be able to influence the decision maker to ensure all relevant information that has been gathered about a candidate as part of the selection process has been taken into account in the selection decision.

- Use face-to-face communication or a phone conversation when informing the candidates about the outcome of the selection process. Do not deliver the selection decision in an email. The candidate needs to be provided with detailed feedback on why they were successful / unsuccessful and what they could work on in future selection processes if unsuccessful. It would be highly appropriate to allow a family member or other relevant representative to be included in this feedback session for support.

## Concluding Comments

While many of the suggestions and recommendations resulting from our research would seem to be common sense, we felt that many organisations continue to 'find their way' in respect to Indigenous recruitment and selection through a trial and error process. People Solutions suggest that 'best practice' can be achieved through the following overarching points that are key to a culturally appropriate, objective and fair recruitment and selection process that results in successful selection decisions:

- The most important aspect of the recruitment and selection process is to ensure a 'culturally safe' environment. That is, to break down barriers of mistrust and anxiety by showing a genuine interest in finding out about the Indigenous candidate – who they are and how they can contribute.

Strategies to develop a culturally safe environment include developing relationships through open, honest and informal communications, preferably face-to-face. It is also essential to explain the whole recruitment and selection process in the beginning. That is, clarify the What, Why and How.

- Ensure all selection methods used have low adverse impact and high predictive validity. This is often difficult to determine but you can consult relevant research and professionals, or do your own adverse impact and validity studies.
- Ensure the recruitment and selection process is as simple and short as possible. Candidates may lose interest if it is a drawn out process, especially if there is a lack of frequent communication.
- Use a merit based selection process but have a flexible and adaptable approach. For example, when there is a gap in a candidate's resume explore why rather than make assumptions and 'screen out' the applicant. Also, make sure you adapt your language and communication style to suite the candidate.
- Have an indigenous person as part of the whole recruitment process.
- Ensure there is a 'real' job at the end of the recruitment and selection process.

## People Solutions Profile

People Solutions is a boutique organisational development consultancy, providing integrated human resources and psychology services for clients across Australia. Our experienced team is a diverse one, comprising organisational psychologists, business leaders and human resources practitioners. Together, we develop and deliver bespoke best practice solutions that span the attraction, selection, development and transition spectrum.



**5 Agnew Way Subiaco WA 6008**

**P 08 9388 0300**

**F 08 9388 0311**

[www.people-solutions.com.au](http://www.people-solutions.com.au)

## About the Author

Eva Zellman is a Senior Consultant at People Solutions with over 10 years' experience in recruitment, selection and assessment practices in Australia and New Zealand. Eva also has a background in career transition, coaching and facilitation/training, as well as experience as a social science researcher.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the involvement and extensive contribution Benjamin Ho has had in this research project. Benjamin is a student at University of Western Australia and worked on this project as part of the practicum requirement of his Master's degree in Organisational Psychology.

We would also like to acknowledge all the Subject Matter Experts interviewed. We appreciate the time you spent to share your knowledge and thoughts with us. Thank you!