

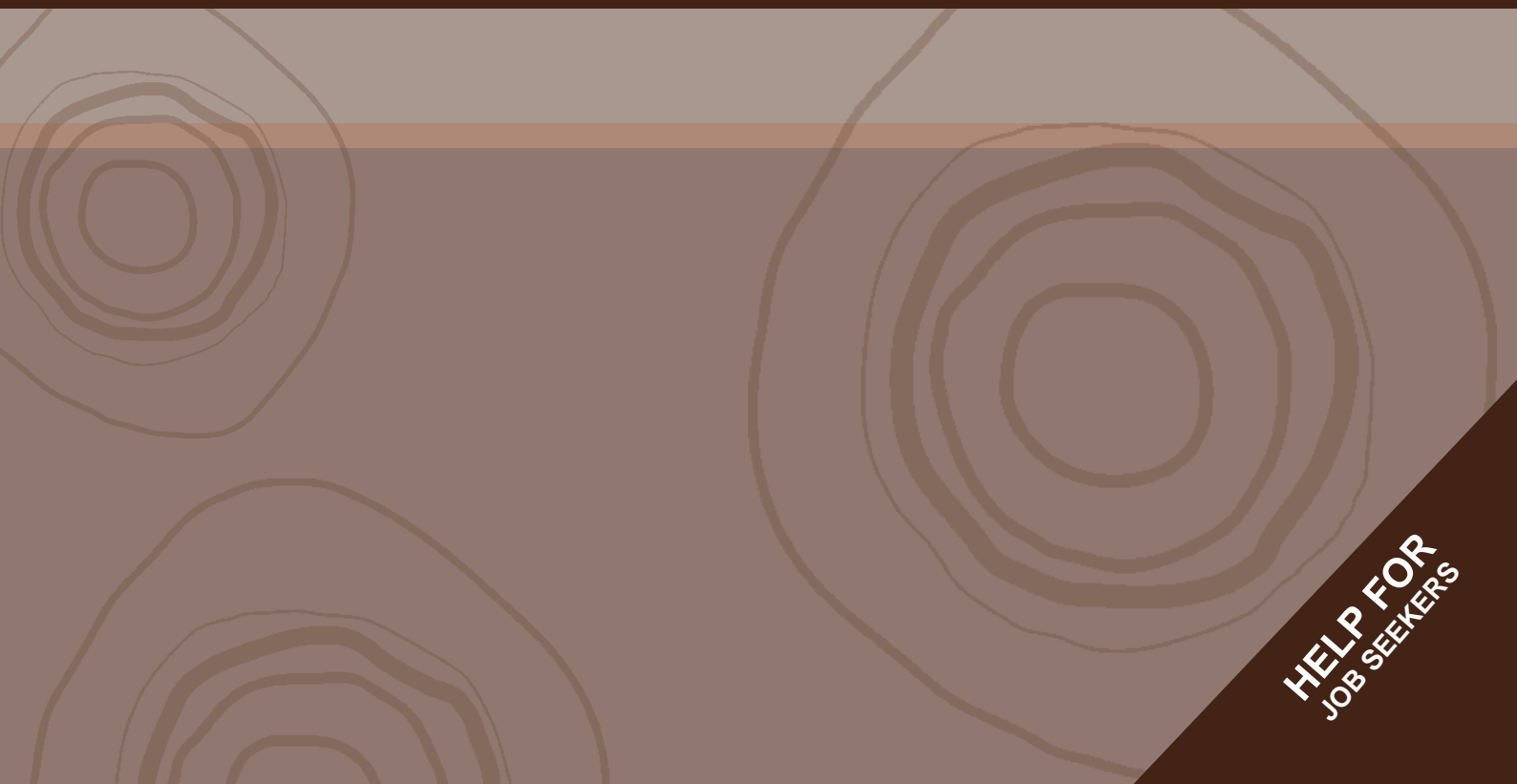
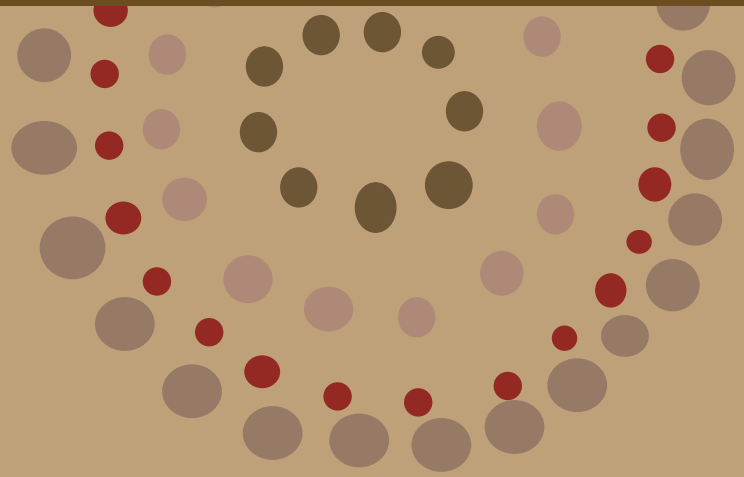


Australian Government

Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations



Applying for a job in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporation —a guide for job seekers



**HELP FOR
JOB SEEKERS**

This guide is intended to help corporations registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*. It is not legal advice and ORIC disclaims any liability arising from its use. People using this document may seek further assistance from ORIC or obtain other professional advice.

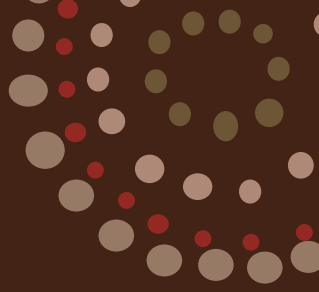
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Where to look

As many Indigenous corporations are located in remote or regional Australia, it is not always easy to know when vacancies occur. The national Indigenous newspaper the *Koori Mail* has a significant employment section but, as a general rule, these positions are advertised on individual corporation websites or in local newspapers.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations also advertise on the ORIC website www.oric.gov.au. Go to the corporation jobs page to see current jobs.

Alternatively, search the internet for third party organisations that offer recruitment services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, such as Trans Remote Assistance.

Quick tips



REMEMBER TO:

- give yourself enough time to write your application
- ring the contact person to get a better idea of the position
- look at the corporation's website for helpful publications, such as its rule book, which will give you a good understanding of the corporation's work
- build common ground by reflecting some of the corporation's language in your application
- re-read your application to make sure you have addressed all the key points
- check that you meet the word limit
- always proofread your application—poor spelling and grammar can really let you down
- send the application in good time and check that it has been received.

Landing a job

Before you apply for a job, think about it thoroughly. Take great care with what you write. You want to present to whoever reads your application a clear idea of your work quality, life experience and skills. Your application, or expression of interest, is very important.

Application

A professional job application usually includes three items—a covering letter, a resume and a document responding to the selection criteria.

Covering letter

In a covering letter you are introducing yourself.

You should state the position you are applying for, the reason you are attracted to the position and why you are a strong applicant. Typically the letter is only a few lines. You may also refer to your attached resume and responses against the selection criteria.

The covering letter serves as both a courtesy and a chance to present a quick snapshot of yourself.

10 Smith Road
Fine Town
Queensland 4040

23 September 2010

Michael Simons
XYZ Aboriginal Corporation
Grey Creek
Western Australia 6000

Dear Mr Simons

I would like to apply for the position of bookkeeper as advertised in the *Koori Mail* on 20 September 2010.

After working for the past three years as an assistant bookkeeper in a large retailing franchise I am ready for a fresh challenge. I enjoy travelling and believe, with my qualifications and experience living and working in regional Australia, I am a strong candidate for the advertised position.

My resume and statement of claims against the selection criteria are attached.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely



Joe Citizen

10 Smith Road
Fine Town
Queensland 4040

Selection Panel
XYZ Aboriginal Corporation
Grey Creek
Western Australia 6000

23 September 2010

Dear selection panel

I would like to apply for the position of bookkeeper as advertised in the *Koori Mail* on 20 September 2010.

After working for the past three years as an assistant bookkeeper in a large retailing franchise I am ready for a fresh challenge. I enjoy travelling and believe, with my qualifications and experience living and working in regional Australia, I am a strong candidate for the advertised position.

My resume and statement of claims against the selection criteria are attached.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours faithfully



Joe Citizen

Resume

You can look at a template and sample resumes on the ORIC website under corporation jobs but some main points to consider are:

Content

- The aim of your resume is to demonstrate to the potential employer that you have the necessary experience, knowledge and motivation to do the job.
- Be selective about what you include—do not put in irrelevant details or any false (made up) information.
- Sell yourself—the potential employer will be attracted to special skills, abilities, accomplishments and successes.
- Use a positive tone and active verbs.

Structure

- *Personal details:* Start with your name, address and phone number/s. An option is to write a couple of sentences to present a personal profile which includes your skills, experience and knowledge. This gives the employer a snapshot of your suitability for the job.
- *Career history:* List your previous positions in this section. Order them in reverse chronological order—that is, put the most recent position first. After each position include a brief description of the role, responsibilities and achievements. This information should be brief unless it significantly relates to the job.
- *Qualifications and/or education:* List your qualifications and professional training in the same way as your career history. List the most recent qualification first. You do not need to list all your results—only the most recent and relevant.
- *References:* Provide two or three referees. These should be people who can attest to your skills, experience and work ethic. Include their contact number/s, email addresses and relationship to you. Choose wisely—your referees are an important determining factor in the recruitment process. Before you submit your application always contact your referees to check they are happy to support you, and to tell them about the position. This is so when an employer contacts them they will be prepared.



Formatting

- Although there is no one 'right' way to format your resume, it should be well organised, concise and easy to read. Avoid long paragraphs and use bullet points if this helps to make the document more direct.
- Make sure your resume is well spaced, in the same font and your margins are aligned.
- Get someone to proofread your resume—it's always difficult to spot your own mistakes and someone else may give you useful feedback. This is called 'an objective eye'.



RESUME OF JOE CITIZEN

Name: Joe Citizen
 Address: 10 Smith Road
 Fine Town
 QLD 4040
 Phone: (09) 808080
 Mobile: 123 456 789
 Email: joe.citizen@youremailis@com.au

QUALIFICATIONS:

Diploma of Accounting CIT Fine Town, QLD 2007–2009
 Courses included:
 MYOB advanced Distinction
 MYOB an overview Credit
 Excel Credit
 Best practise Credit
 Managing people Credit
 Diploma in Bookkeeping Sunnybrook College, VIC 2005–2007
 Won student medal for consistently achieving high standards in set assignments
 Year 12 Certificate Regular High School, VIC 1998–2004

WORK EXPERIENCE:

Assistant bookkeeper Big Stores, Fine Town, QLD 2008–2009
 My duties include scheduling work rosters and managing the wages for 12 staff. I am also responsible for checking employment contracts and award rates. Other duties include undertaking debit and credit accounts; *undertaking routine documentation and general duties related to monitoring the credit and debit accounts; arranging payment by cheque or other means; allocating expenditure to correct budget accounts; preparing correspondence associated with payments for action by credit or sales action; other duties as directed.*
 Administration assistant Bob's Garage, Sunnybrook, VIC 2007–2008
 Logged in repair jobs, prepared invoices and helped with the payroll preparation. My ability with computer applications such as Excel transformed the way Bob's Garage presented its books

Part time trainee mechanic Bob's Garage, Sunnybrook, VIC
 Won student medal for consistently achieving high standards in set and it assignments.

COMMUNITY AND LEISURE INTERESTS:
 Secretary Greenacre Basketball Club 2007–2008
 Member of Grey Creek High School Student association 2003–2004

Resume of Joe Citizen

Name: Joe Citizen
 Address: 10 Smith Road
 Fine Town
 QLD 4040
 Phone: (09) 808080
 Mobile: 123 456 789
 Email: joe.citizen@youremailis@com.au

QUALIFICATIONS:

Diploma of Accounting CIT Fine Town, QLD 2007–2009
 Courses included:
 MYOB advanced Distinction
 MYOB an overview Credit
 Excel Credit
 Managing people Credit
Diploma in Bookkeeping Sunnybrook College, VIC 2005–2007
 Won student medal for consistently achieving high standards in set assignments
 Year 12 Certificate Regular High School, VIC 1998–2004

WORK EXPERIENCE:

Assistant bookkeeper Big Stores, Fine Town, QLD 2008–2009
 My duties include scheduling work rosters and managing the wages for 12 staff. I am also responsible for checking employment contracts and award rates. Other duties include undertaking debit and credit accounts and carrying out routine documentation, including arranging payment by cheque or other means, allocating expenditure to correct budget accounts, and preparing correspondence.

Administration assistant Bob's Garage, Sunnybrook, VIC 2007–2008
 Logged in repair jobs, prepared invoices and helped with the payroll preparation. My ability with computer applications such as Excel transformed the way Bob's Garage presented its books

Part time trainee mechanic Bob's Garage, Sunnybrook, VIC 2006–2007
 My interest in cars and fixing things attracted me to my uncle's garage. Under my uncle's eye I was able to learn a great deal not only about cars but also running a small business. For example, I implemented a new system for tracking jobs which brought about a 20 per cent improved efficiency over two years.

COMMUNITY AND LEISURE INTERESTS:
 Secretary Greenacre Basketball Club 2007–2008
 Member of Grey Creek High School Student Association 2003–2004

Selection criteria

What are selection criteria?

Selection criteria describe the level of knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience required for a particular role. Your responses to each of the selection criteria will be used by the selection panel to assess your application.

Members of the selection panel will compare the quality of your application with the other applications they receive. It is therefore very important that you match your skills and experience to the selection criteria—these are the requirements for the position.

Selection criteria—key principles

You can improve the quality of your statements against the selection criteria by following a number of key principles.



MAKE SURE YOU:

- support claims with relevant, concrete examples. Provide evidence of your achievements and examples of your experience
- use positive and active language. Use active verbs to describe your contribution in previous jobs
- use plain and correct English. Ensure that your application is written clearly, concisely and grammatically. Remember to check your spelling before submitting your application
- address all parts of the selection criteria. Avoid addressing the selection criteria as a whole. Address each one separately and precisely
- state your achievements. Demonstrate what impact you have had in previous jobs in terms of the difference you have made and the results you have achieved
- keep responses short and to the point—this demonstrates your ability to communicate effectively and precisely. About 250 words is generally appropriate for each criterion
- have a clear layout and proper presentation. Consider using bullet points in your statement against the selection criteria as this will not only force you to write succinctly but also makes it easier for the selection panel.

Remember, the onus is on you to convince the selection panel of your suitability. Ensure your application is clear, concise and addresses all the criteria.

Steps in addressing selection criteria

1 *Step one—understand the selection criteria*

Before you start your application, be sure you understand what is meant by each selection criterion. If you are in any way unclear ask the corporation or do some research.

For example, a common criterion is ‘well-developed written and oral communication skills’. This is asking whether you have the capacity to write well and speak effectively. In your response you might draw out some evidence of your ability to:

- structure written communications to meet the needs and understanding of the intended audience
- express opinions, information and key points of an argument clearly and concisely
- write convincingly in an engaging and expressive manner.

In other words, when responding to this type of criterion, make sure you address these ‘hidden’ aspects of the general statement.

An example of a more specific criterion might be ‘knowledge and understanding of, and commitment to, the corporation’s values and objectives’. Each registered corporation has a rule book (corporate constitution) available on the ORIC website as part of the public register. Search through this document to gain an understanding of the corporation’s aims and general governing structure. Additional information can be found on the corporation’s web page and among its publications.

2 *Step two—strong opening sentences*

Begin each criterion with an opening sentence that clearly states your strength. ‘I have developed strong written communication skills over the course of my career’, is an example.

3 *Step three—provide the evidence needed to support step two*

Follow each clear opening statement with an equally clear supporting statement. Offer detailed examples of how and in what context you were able to demonstrate your skill strengths. Use examples that describe exactly what you did and the outcome. You want to convince your potential employer you meet the required criterion.

4 *Step four—check your work*

Before submitting your application, ask yourself:

- have I used positive and concise language?
- have I used strong action words?
- have I avoided unsupported claims about my capabilities?
- have I addressed all aspects of the criteria?
- have I paid attention to the language of the criterion?

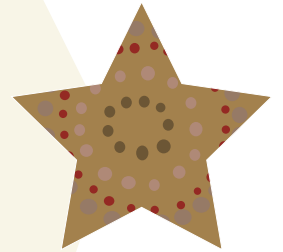
STAR

Addressing selection criteria requires you to be specific. Choose a situation where you performed a particular task, list the actions taken in performing that task, and summarise the result.

By outlining a specific situation from start to finish, you are demonstrating how you meet a particular selection criterion. This is called the STAR model. It's a very useful approach as members on a selection panel can see at once how your skills can be readily applied to their corporation.

STAR model:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Situation | briefly explain the context (i.e. your work position or situation) |
| Task | briefly state a task you were required to perform in this position |
| Action | describe the steps you took in performing the task |
| Result | explain the result—concentrate on positive outcomes and focus on the future benefits. |



If you don't meet the selection criteria

Employers are looking for the best match for the advertised position. If you believe that you have the ability to do the job but you don't quite meet all the essential criteria, it may be still worth applying. Of course it's likely you will be in competition with applicants who meet all—or more—of the criteria, but the selection panel may value your experience in other ways.

In responding to essential and desirable criteria it's always worth thinking outside the square.

Sometimes it's tempting to leave a criterion blank, especially if nothing comes immediately to mind, but avoid this temptation. It's always better to offer a response even if it is only about what you plan to do—or would like to do—if you had the opportunity than to say nothing.



Interview tips

Interview preparation

Before you are called for an interview:

- research and continue to gather information about the corporation
- practise answering possible interview questions—use the STAR model to help you to come up with examples.

An interview gives you the best opportunity to display your skills so it's important to be focused, motivated and confident. To stand out, you must show you have prepared thoroughly. Have a list of your key skills and competencies handy and be ready to talk about them using recent examples. It always comes across well if you can describe a situation where you have been able to use your skills to good effect.



Questions to expect

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporation will ask you all sorts of questions but a standard one from most interview panels is, 'What skills and experience can you bring to the position?'

Your answer should briefly identify the key responsibilities of the position. You should describe how, with your experience, knowledge and work ethic, you can fulfil these responsibilities and make a contribution to the organisation. You may be quite specific about your skills but you may also want to demonstrate your ability to be open minded. For example, you may mention you're quick to learn new processes, or you have an ability to work within tight timeframes or in small teams. You may also wish to mention that you have a good work ethic and an ability to liaise courteously with supervisors, co-workers, and clients.

An interview panel may also ask, 'What are your strengths and weaknesses?'

Think about these before the interview. You probably have already identified some of your strengths in your application. Don't be hesitant to identify a weakness but turn it into a positive. For example, you may identify that your weakness is the absence of a specific skill but that you look forward to learning this skill or developing it further.

Also be prepared to answer questions about your:

- time management skills
- ability to work independently and as part of a team
- organisational skills
- leadership qualities
- understanding of a good work ethic.

Cultural awareness and sensitivity

You should expect the selection panel to ask you questions about your experience working with, and engaging with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The selection panel will also pick up on your awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural customs. Bear in mind your interview is the panel's first chance to gauge what kind of person you are. Your sensitivity to, and awareness of, cultural differences will determine, to a very large degree, your suitability for the job.

Know the corporation's activities and structure

The selection panel will also want to assess your ability to fit in and work with their corporation. The panel is bound to look at you favourably if you can show you have a good understanding about the corporation's activities and its structure.

As mentioned under 'quick tips' on page 1, this information can be found on the corporation's web page and/or in any of its publications. Similarly, ORIC maintains a public register where you, and other members of the general public, can review the rule book of any corporation registered with ORIC. The rule book is particularly useful. It will give you information about the corporation's key activities as well as its structure.

Specific knowledge relating to the position

The selection panel will want to establish what you can bring to the position in terms of experience, knowledge and qualifications. For example, if you are applying for a bookkeeper's position, you should mention your experience working in electronic systems, such as MYOB, or your expertise in maintaining proper financial records.

Remoteness

Be prepared for questions about working in remote or regional areas. The selection panel will want to assess your ability to adapt. This is particularly so if you have no previous experience of living in remote communities. The selection panel will want to draw out from you your ability to cope with challenges associated with delivering services in remote and regional areas.

Questions for the selection panel

Once the interview is over, you will have a chance to ask questions. This is the time to clarify any points about the position and to demonstrate your interest and enthusiasm. Make sure you understand:

- specific parts of the job and the duties involved
- who you would be reporting to
- remuneration packages and benefits
- when you will be notified of the selection panel's decision
- starting date
- opportunities for further education or skills training (where appropriate).

Questions specific to remote areas

If the corporation is in a remote area, you may want to ask about:

- location of the community
- size of the community or town—its population and geographical area
- accommodation options—for example, if the corporation is advertising for two people, would you have to share accommodation?

- services—for example, how far away are shops, banks, post offices?
- distance to main centre/town/city
- education options (if you have kids)
- location of the nearest police station.

Phone interviewing tips

Phone interviews are a common way for employers to screen candidates. They are also an option when face-to-face interviews are difficult to arrange because of travel distances.

Preparing for a phone interview with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporation is in many ways the same way as preparing for a face-to-face interview. Be ready to answer questions about your suitability for the job and what you can offer the corporation. But also think about the following:

- Make sure you have a quiet place to conduct the interview. If you have the phone conversation in a busy area of an office, home or public place, it may be difficult for the interviewer to hear you properly and also you may be easily distracted. It is important that you give the interview your full attention and you are clear about the questions put to you.
- One of the advantages of a phone interview is that you can spread your notes around you and refer to them easily and as often as you like. If there is more than one interviewer, you may wish to write down each of their names so that when they take turns pitching questions you can answer directly using the person's correct name. This will demonstrate not only that you are answering separate questions but also your interpersonal skills.
- Remember to keep your answers concise. In a telephone interview you will not be able to read the interviewer's body language to check that you're on the right track and your answers are being positively received. Delivering concise but complete answers to questions will demonstrate your skills and knowledge and also display your ability to communicate succinctly and directly.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly. Remember to project your voice clearly and be aware of speaking in a positive tone.
- Keep a pen and paper close to you as you may want to take notes during the interview. Similarly, have a glass of water beside you.
- Don't interrupt when the interviewer is speaking.
- At the conclusion of the interview, thank the selection panel members for their time and ask about the next steps in the recruitment process.

