



*City of*  
**KINGSTON**

# Applicant Toolkit 2025

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# INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the City of Kingston applicant toolkit, designed to guide you through the application process and help you prepare for a successful interview.

Whether you're applying for a role in local government or another sector, understanding the specific requirements and expectations is crucial. Tailoring your application materials, including your resume and cover letter, is essential to highlight your qualifications and meet the specific requirements of the role.

Additionally, preparing for interviews by reviewing common questions and practicing your responses can significantly enhance your chances of success. By using this toolkit, you'll be better equipped to navigate the application process and showcase your strengths effectively.

At the City of Kingston, we are dedicated to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered.

## **Our core values guide our actions:**

- > **We** make a difference
- > **We** show care and respect
- > **We** take pride in our work
- > **We** are better together

Join us in creating a community that celebrates diversity and inclusion.

As a Kingston employee, you'll champion these values, helping to build an environment where everyone can thrive and contribute.

We're committed to equal opportunity, child safety, and reconciliation. We welcome applicants from all backgrounds, including people of all genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations, abilities, and ages. We particularly encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals.

At Kingston, you'll be part of a team driving positive change, promoting equity, and enhancing accessibility throughout our organisation and the broader community.

We support reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment and selection process, as well as during employment. If you need reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process, please email [peopleandculture@kingston.vic.gov.au](mailto:peopleandculture@kingston.vic.gov.au)

Unlock your potential with this toolkit, designed to guide you through every step of the job application journey.

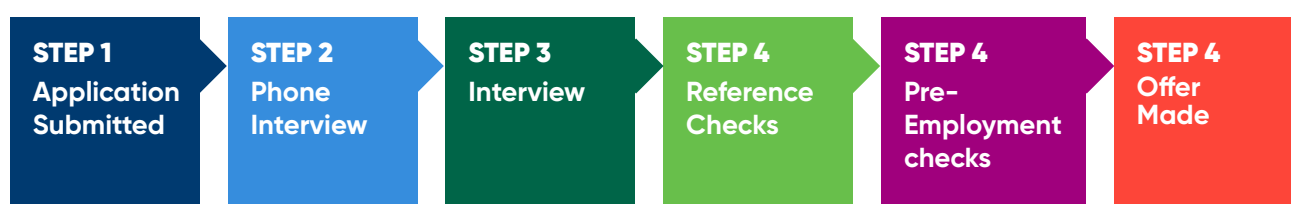
## Topics Covered include

- 1** What does the recruitment process at Kingston look like?
- 2** Self-reflection before beginning your job search
- 3** Key considerations when reviewing a job advertisement
- 4** Tips for writing a resume
- 5** Writing a cover letter
- 6** Preparing for your interview
- 7** After the interview – what's next?
- 8** After the interview – what's next?
- 9** Feedback after the interview

# 1. WHAT DOES THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS AT KINGSTON LOOK LIKE?

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The recruitment process typically follows a structured sequence of steps to ensure a thorough evaluation of candidates



## 1. Application submitted

Candidates start the recruitment process by submitting their applications, typically including a resume and cover letter. This step helps the hiring manager learn about the candidate's qualifications, experience, and interest in the role.

## 2. Phone interview

After reviewing applications, selected candidates are invited for a phone interview. This conversation helps assess their communication skills, clarify application details, and determine how well they align with the role and organisational culture.

## 3. Interview

Candidates who demonstrate the desired skills and attributes in the phone interview are invited for an in-person interview. This stage involves deeper discussions about their experience and skills, and may include behavioural questions, technical assessments, or case studies to assess their fit for the role.

## 4. Reference checks

After successful interviews, the hiring manager checks references. This involves contacting previous employers to verify the candidate's work history, performance, and character, ensuring their claims match their actual experience. We require two references for all external hires.

## 5. Pre-employment checks

Before an offer is made, additional pre-employment checks will be conducted which may include Police checks, Working with children checks, verification of educational qualifications, medical assessments, and any required certifications or licenses relevant to the role.

## 6. Offer made

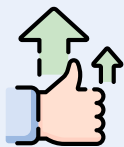
Following the satisfactory completion of all pre-employment checks, a formal job offer is made to the candidate. This offer typically includes details about salary, benefits, job responsibilities, and start date. The candidate is then given time to review and accept the terms of employment.

## 2. SELF-REFLECTION BEFORE BEGINNING YOUR JOB SEARCH

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Applying for a new position is a significant decision. It's important to consider several factors before starting your job search process.

By reflecting on the following questions, you can focus your efforts on roles that not only match your skills and capabilities but also align with your values and career direction.



### Motivation

- What aspects of work motivate you the most?
- Do you prefer independent or collaborative work?
- What type of organisation or industry appeals to you most?
- Are there specific areas within your field that particularly interest you?
- What elements should a role have for you to feel satisfied 80% of the time? (Remember, no role is perfect 100% of the time). Think about what you like to do, what strengths do you enjoy using? What makes you feel good about the nature of the work?



### Organisation and culture

- What type of organisational or team culture do you thrive in?
- How would you describe your ideal work culture?
- What behaviours do you expect to see or not see?
- Are there specific values you'd like your organisation or team to embody?
- How important is it that organisational values align with your personal values?





### **Location and flexibility**

- Do you have a preferred work location?
- How far are you willing to commute?
- Is working locally important to you?
- How many days per week would you prefer to work on-site?
- How important is workplace flexibility to you, and what does this look like in practice?
- What are your expectations regarding remote work or hybrid arrangements?



### **Development and career opportunities**

- What kind of professional development or career advancement opportunities are you seeking?
- How would limited career progression within an organisation impact you? How would you feel about doing a role that may not have a clear progression pathway, one where you may need to create your own opportunities?
- Are there specific skills or experiences you want to gain that could help you advance your career, even if it means making a sideways move to a different role or department?



### **Non negotiables**

- Are there any absolute deal breakers that would prevent you from accepting a position?
- Consider factors such as working hours, location, commute time, salary, or organisational culture.

## 3. KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN REVIEWING A JOB ADVERTISEMENT

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When evaluating a job advertisement, be sure to carefully assess whether the position aligns with your career aspirations and personal values.

Here are some important factors to consider

### Alignment with career goals

- Does the job match your shorter term or longer-term goals?
- Do the organisation's values align with yours?

### Skills match

- Do you have most (70–80%) of the required skills and qualifications? (These are called various things like key selection criteria or essential skills)
- If unsure about what criteria you meet, look beyond the job description to identify underlying skills. For example, "stakeholder management" implies communication, consultation, and understanding others' needs.
- Be honest in your self-assessment, ask for help if you are unsure. Seek out feedback of your strengths and areas of improvement from trusted people you've worked with.
- How much of the role do you think you could learn on the job, and which aspects would you be ready to handle confidently from day one.

### Identifying key words

- Note repeated terms or phrases in the job description.
- Use these key words in your application to reflect back your understanding of what is important.
- Focus on these areas when preparing for interviews.



What can you expect to find on a job advertisement

Job Title	States the position title using industry-standard terminology
Job Description	Overview of the role and how it contributes to the organisation's objectives
Role and Responsibilities	Outlines the specific duties and expectations of the position
Skills and Experience	Details the necessary education, technical skills and soft skills required to perform the role
Benefits and Salary	Benefits or perks associated with the role and organisation
Organisational Culture and Information	Describes the organisation and includes values, culture and goals



**TIP:** Carefully read through the job advertisement and position description before submitting your application. By reflecting on your values and career goals, you'll be better prepared to recognise roles that align with what you're looking for.

## 4. TIPS FOR WRITING A RESUME

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Writing a resume involves several key steps to ensure you successfully communicate your skills, experience, and achievements to potential employers.

When preparing your resume, tailor the level of detail to match the specific role you're applying for. This helps highlight your relevant skills and experiences.

### What to include in your resume



#### Personal Information

- Place your name and contact details at the top of the page
- Include phone number and professional email address



#### Professional Summary

- Craft a brief, compelling overview (1-2 sentences)
- Align your career goals with the position



#### Skills Showcase

- Highlight relevant abilities and strengths
- Match skills to job requirements
- Consider transferable skills from previous experience



## Educational Background

- List pertinent qualifications and certifications
- Include ongoing education if applicable



## Work Experience

- Start with your most recent position
- For each role provide: Company Name, Job Title, Employment duties, key achievements (at least 1 per role)



## Tailoring and Keywords

- Customise content to the specific job
- Incorporate keywords from the job description



## Formatting for readability

- Use bullet points for clarity
- Ensure ample white space
- Keep paragraphs concise



## References

- State "References available upon request"



**TIP:** Your resume should be a concise, well-formatted document that clearly communicates your suitability for the role, making it easy for hiring managers to identify your potential value to their organisation.

## Resume best practice: What to include, what not to include

When preparing your resume, consider the following guidelines to make it more effective and professional:

### Keep it concise:

- Aim for 1-2 pages maximum
- Focus on relevant information for the specific role
- Highlight key skills and experiences
- Don't be afraid of career gaps, just add a brief explanation for the break eg. parental leave, sabbatical, health.

### Tailor your content:

- Remember to tailor your resume and cover letter to the role you are applying for
- Include recent positions (generally within the last 15 years)
- Consider a career summary for older roles if relevant
- Briefly outline any significant gaps in employment. Label these gaps neutrally and focus on transferable skills obtained during the time.

e.g. health/sabbatical reworded as "professional development break" – focus on volunteering or pursued certifications  
OR parental leave as "career break – family focus"

### Maintain professionalism:

- Use simple, readable fonts
- Avoid colors, underlines, or fancy formatting
- Ensure consistent layout and style

### Protect privacy:

- Omit referee details unless requested
- Include a statement that references are available upon request

### Optional extras:

- Add personal touches based on the role and your experience
- Consider including relevant volunteer work or achievements
- Highlight specific skills or certifications that set you apart



**TIP:** Remember, your resume should be a clear, concise document that effectively showcases your qualifications for the specific position you're applying for.

**TIP:** Always proofread your documents before submitting to ensure there are no spelling or grammatical errors.

# 5. WRITING A COVER LETTER

Preparing a cover letter involves several key steps to ensure it effectively communicates your qualifications and interest in a position.

Steps to preparing a cover letter

## 1. Address the right person:

- Research and address the hiring manager by name where possible
- Use "Dear Hiring Manager" if the name is not available

## 2. Introduce yourself with confidence

- Clearly state the job you're applying for and highlight your relevant skills and experience
- Explain why you're interested in the role and the organisation

## 3. Highlight relevant skills and experience:

- Connect your skills to the job requirements using specific examples. Use the STAR method to outline this: Situation, Task, Action and Result
- Show how your experience aligns with the organisation's goals and values
- Don't be afraid to bring up examples from other roles and industries as long as the skill is demonstrated

## 4. Conclude with a call to action:

- Summarise your interest in the position and express enthusiasm for an interview
- Thank the employer for their time and consideration

## 5. Final check:

- Ensure the letter is well-formatted, easy to read, and free of errors
- Use professional language and a standard font
- Ensure the cover letter is no more than 1-2 pages long



**TIP:** For a free cover letter template visit the SEEK website: free cover letter template

## 6. PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

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An interview is your chance to show who you are. Relax, take a deep breath, and let your personality shine. Share what makes you unique – it's what will make you stand out.

Interviews have two main purposes:

### For employers:

- Assess skills, experience, and cultural add
- Evaluate how a candidate's unique perspective could strengthen the team

### For candidates:

- Learn about day-to-day responsibilities and workplace culture
- Gauge comfort level with the team and manager
- Determine if the role aligns with your career path and values

**Note:** You can request accommodations to ensure a fair and comfortable interview process. Interviews allow both parties to have a meaningful conversation and make informed decisions about employment.

## Tips for a successful interview

### It's OK to be nervous

Interviewers expect nerves and will try to make you feel comfortable. Have a sip of water or pause if you need some time to think before answering a question. Bring in some paper and a pen if it helps you process and bring your best.

### Think of it as a conversation

An interview is a dialogue to discuss your skills and experience. Your nerves will likely settle as the conversation progresses.

### Prepare well

Good preparation boosts confidence and helps you answer questions effectively. This includes researching, reviewing your materials, and preparing responses and questions

### Practice your responses

Rehearse your answers out loud to make them feel natural and concise.



**TIP:** Ask questions – Ensure you have prepared at least 1-2 questions you can ask the interview panel. These can include: “What are the key challenges of the role?” “How would you describe the team culture?”, “What is your favourite thing about the culture?” “How does the team respond in moments of crisis/under pressure/when things go wrong?” or “What training and support will I be provided with?”

**TIP:** Take charge of your interview by asking for help when you need it. Feel free to ask for questions to be repeated, take time to think, or write them down if it helps.

An interview is your chance to show who you are. Relax, take a deep breath, and let your personality shine. Share what makes you unique – it's what will make you stand out.



## Interview preparation checklist

### Research the organisation and role:

- ☐ **Read the position description:** get a copy if you don't have one and identify the main responsibilities, core competencies, and stakeholder relationships.
- ☐ **Explore the organisation's website:** learn about its services, projects, values, and strategic direction.
- ☐ **Understand the sector:** Learn about other similar organisations to understand the sector and demonstrate strategic thinking.

### Understand your skills and fit for the role:

- ☐ **Evaluate your relevant skills:** Identify your soft skills and experiences that match the role requirements.
- ☐ **Align your strengths with the key selection criteria:** Assess how your strengths fit with what the organisation is looking for.
- ☐ **Why are you the right person for the role:** Prepare a brief statement explaining how your skills, experiences, and strengths make you a great fit for the role, why you're interested in this position now, and why you want to join the organisation.

### Prepare for common interview questions:

- ☐ **Practice key questions:** Prepare answers for common questions like "Tell me about yourself," "Why are you interested in this role?" and "How do you manage priorities?"
- ☐ **Use the STAR method:** Structure your responses using the STAR method
  - **S**ituation – Set the context
  - **T**ask – Describe the task or challenge
  - **A**ction – Explain the actions you took
  - **R**esult – Share the outcome
- ☐ **Tailor your responses:** Write questions that relate to the key responsibilities and practice your answers.
- ☐ **Get Feedback:** Ask friends or mentors to review your responses and provide feedback. You could also ask a trusted friend or colleague to do a mock interview with you to practice.

## Prepare insightful questions to ask:

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### Plan questions about the organisation:

- Ask about organisational culture
- Enquire about team dynamics
- Discuss expectations for success in the role. What do the first 3 to 6 months look like in terms of targets and goals.

## Plan your travel:

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### Confirm the interview location

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### Plan how you will get there and arrive at least 15 minutes early

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### Decide what to wear based on the organisation's dress code

## Final preparations:

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### Review your resume and cover letter so you can talk about your experiences.

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### Send a thank-you email after the interview to show appreciation

## Virtual interviews: be prepared

Virtual interviews are becoming more popular and there may be situations where an online interview may be required.

If you don't have a suitable setup at home, consider booking a room at your local library or office hub. Alternatively, ask a friend if they can provide a quiet space with the necessary resources.

To succeed, it's crucial to understand and prepare for the unique aspects of these online meetings.



### Tech check

Ensure your technology and internet connection are working smoothly before the interview. If your laptop does not work as it should, you can use your phone as a last resort.



### Quiet space

Choose a quiet, distraction-free location, put your phone on silent.



### Visuals matter

Ensure good lighting and a professional backdrop.



### Arrive early

Log in 5-10 minutes early to get settled. This is also a chance to see how you look on screen.



### Appropriate appearance

Dress professionally, even if it's virtual. Wear neat, clean clothing appropriate for the industry you're applying to.



### Be prepared

- Have a plan for handling any technical issues
- Keep notes handy for reference and a pen to make any notes of the discussion.

## General interview structure at City of Kingston

### 1. Introduction & overview of the position

- Panel introduction
- Review of the position, team and organisational structure

### 2. Introductory questions

- Opportunity to get to know the applicant and their motivation and goals

### 3. Questions that support behavioural, technical & cultural skills

- 6-8 questions relevant to the role
- Behavioural questions will be in the S.T.A.R format

### 4. Mandatory Child Safe questions

- 1-2 questions relating to Child Safety in the role

### 5. Conclusion

- Review of benefits of working at Kingston
- Opportunity for the applicant to ask questions
- Next steps

## 7. AFTER THE INTERVIEW: WHAT'S NEXT?

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Waiting for interview results can be challenging. Here are some steps you can take:

### **Review your performance**

- Think about what you did well and what you could improve.
- Write down your thoughts for future reference.
- This is useful even if you get the job.

### **Follow up**

- Send a thank-you email to the interviewer.
- If you're still interested, say so. For example: "I'm excited about the possibility of joining your team."
- If you've decided the job isn't for you, let them know politely. Thank them for their time and indicate you are no longer interested.

### **Be patient**

- Delays in hearing back are common.
- Stay open-minded about when you'll get a response.
- If you don't hear back by the expected date, it's okay to send a polite follow-up email e.g. Thank you for your time the other week, could I please know what timeframe I could expect to hear back?

### **Handling disappointment:**

- It's normal to feel disappointed if you weren't selected for the role.
- Not being chosen doesn't mean you performed poorly or that you weren't suitable and capable, there are many factors involved.

Remember, these are suggestions. Use your judgment to decide what works best for you.

## 8. FEEDBACK AFTER THE INTERVIEW

If you are unsuccessful following your interview, here are some tips on asking for and receiving feedback following an interview:

### Asking for feedback

- **Be polite and respectful:** Always start by thanking the interviewer for their time and expressing gratitude for the opportunity. Maintain a polite tone throughout your request.
- **Explain your reason:** Clearly state why you're asking for feedback, such as wanting to improve for future interviews or to understand areas for personal growth.
- **Ask specific questions:** Pose targeted questions to encourage detailed feedback, such as "What areas could I improve?" or "How could I enhance my application?"
- **Use email:** Email is generally preferred over phone calls as it allows the interviewer time to consider their response.
- **Timing matters:** Send your request shortly after the interview or once you've received the outcome.

### Receiving feedback

- **Be open-minded:** Show that you value the feedback and are willing to learn from it.
- **Apply the feedback:** Use the feedback to improve your skills and performance in future interviews.
- **Maintain professionalism:** Even if the feedback is negative, respond graciously and thank the interviewer for their input.
- **Follow up:** If you don't receive feedback, a polite follow-up can be appropriate but avoid being pushy.
- **Reflect on the feedback:** Consider how you can implement the suggestions to enhance your interview skills and overall career development.

We trust that this has been a valuable resource to support you through the job application process.

Our goal is to ensure that every step of the recruitment journey is both informative and engaging, providing you with the support, tools and insights needed to succeed.

If you have any feedback on ways to improve this toolkit email [peopleandculture@kingston.vic.gov.au](mailto:peopleandculture@kingston.vic.gov.au)

We wish you all the very best with your future endeavours, whether within the City of Kingston or beyond. Remember that every interaction, every application, and every interview is a chance to learn and grow.

Stay connected with us and explore the many opportunities available to contribute to our vibrant community.

Kingston Career Website: [careers.kingston.vic.gov.au/jobs/search](https://careers.kingston.vic.gov.au/jobs/search)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/cityofkingston](https://linkedin.com/company/cityofkingston)



## 9. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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**Free cover letter template:**

[Free cover letter template - SEEK](#)

**Resume writing guide:**

[How to write a resume in Australia: A step-by-step guide with examples - SEEK](#)

**Free resume template:**

[Free resumé template - SEEK](#)

**Free ATS\* Resume Checker:**

[Free ATS Resume Checker - Score & Grade Your Resume](#)

**ATS\* Resume Format Guide:**

[ATS Resume Format Guide \(Template and Example\) | Indeed.com Australia](#)

\*ATS – Applicant tracking System



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