

## 10 TOP TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

The purpose of this top tips document is to guide an applicant through the process of applying for a position at Sunshine Coast Council.

### Tip 1 – Plan well

Give some good thought to why you are applying for the position.

Go through the Position Profile with a highlighter pen or use the comments function on the PDF. Highlight any application instructions and key points about the position.

Take some notes or do a “brain dump”, where you scribble down all of your ideas while you think of them. After you have completed your application, go back over these notes and ensure you have included all of your thoughts. Often your first thoughts are your best ones. This process may also make starting the actual writing of the application easier.

### Tip 2 – Follow instructions

Include a covering letter / written application and a resume.

The covering letter / written application will generally be no more than 3 pages, highlighting your ability to meet the key responsibilities and requirements listed. When responding ensure you use examples that are relevant to the key responsibilities and duties of the position and to broadly consider the capabilities relevant to each.

Ensure your application is submitted on time at [www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au](http://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au).

### Tip 3 – Understanding key responsibilities and requirements

Key responsibilities relate to duties or skills required of the employee in the role.

Key requirements will be either mandatory or desirable, often referring to qualifications and licences or specific experience, and provide you with a quick checklist for your suitability for the role.

Selection criteria, if listed in the Recruitment Process section of the Position Profile, are used to further identify and define particular knowledge, attributes and experience a candidate needs to successfully carry out the role.

### Tip 4 – Use examples, tell a story to give depth and meaning to your responses

Use language that is strong; consider action words like ‘revised’, ‘managed’, ‘negotiated’ - rather than vague language such as ‘contributed’ to ‘or ‘involved in’.

Avoid “I did” and “I think”, and “I feel” statements as they can lack depth and are often more about opinion, rather than evidence.

A good way to outline your suitability (and to keep on track) is to provide examples and tell stories about your experiences.

Here are two models that you may consider to organise your writing:

The CAR technique	The STAR technique
<b>C</b> ontext - Where and when did you do it? (set the scene)	<b>S</b> ituation
<b>A</b> ction - What did you do and how did you do it?	<b>T</b> ask
<b>R</b> esult - What was the result of your actions?	<b>A</b> ction
	<b>R</b> esponse

## Tip 5 – Be accurate

Pay attention to accuracy, clear/logical expression, tone, spelling, grammar and punctuation by proofreading. Avoid acronyms and jargon. Write in plain English so you are clearly understood by the reader. Ensure you give an honest representation and do not exaggerate facts.

Your resume needs to be up to date. Make sure that you're listing the correct dates of employment, job titles, education etc; discrepancies will be noticed.

## Tip 6 – Presentation is important

Make the layout easy to read (use font Times New Roman or Arial, 11 or 12 point size) with 2-3cm margins on the top, sides and bottom each page.

Before submitting your application it is a good idea to get a trusted friend or colleague to check your application for spelling, grammar, readability and content.

Put page numbers, your name, and the position title or vacancy number, in a header or footer of each page.

## Tip 7 – Check, check and triple check

There are no extra points for submitting an application early – so take your time to get it right.

## Tip 8 – Include a covering letter

The letter should include:

- The date, your name, address, preferred telephone contact and email address.
- A formal greeting - e.g. Dear Sir/Madam.
- A subject heading, e.g. Re: [Name of position] or Application for [Name of position]. Include the vacancy number
- A small paragraph that sells your suitability for and interest in the role.

## Tip 9 – Ask your referees before you name them

It may be embarrassing for everyone, if you have not asked the person's permission to act as a referee for you.

It is a good idea to chat with your referee about the vacant position, and if you are comfortable, share your application with them. The more they know the better they can support you.

## Tip 10 – Prepare for an interview in advance

It is possible that you may be invited to interview at short notice. With this in mind it is recommended that you prepare for an interview once the application closes – just in case. Consider what the interview panel might ask you. It is likely that you might be asked questions about the key responsibilities and requirements of the position and also about your experiences. Have some examples ready that will demonstrate your strengths in particular areas. Also prepare a question for the panel. They may ask you to expand upon sections of your application so be prepared.

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**Sunshine Coast Council**

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