



Public Works and
Government Services
Canada

Travaux publics et
Services gouvernementaux
Canada



Respect ♦ Integrity ♦ Excellence ♦ Leadership

Serving
GOVERNMENT,
Serving
CANADIANS.



writing your Federal Government cover letter

by Jo-Anne Kother

PWGSC, Western Region
Human Resources Development Programs

2016

Canada 

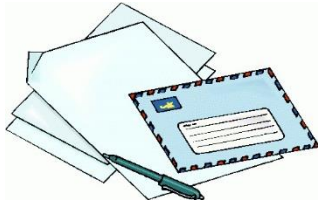


This Handbook is available online as a PDF document on *the WIRE: Writing your Federal Government cover letter*; and on **GCpedia**:
http://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/wiki/PWGSC_Human_Resources_Branch/Career_Management

Table of Contents

Introduction to Cover Letters	Page 1
• What is a Cover Letter	
Preparing to Write the Cover Letter	Page 3
• When a cover letter is required	
• When a cover letter is not required	
Structuring the Cover Letter	Page 6
a) Structure of a cover letter not being submitted online	
b) Structure of a cover letter for an online submission	
Style	Page 10
Finishing Touches	Page 10
Appendix A: Example Cover Letter – Cover Letter Required	Page 11
Appendix B: Example Cover Letter – Cover Letter Not Required	Page 18
Appendix C: Additional Resources	Page 21

This handbook is a companion to the *Writing Your Federal Government Résumé* handbook. It is available online as a PDF document on *the WiRE: Writing Your Federal Government Résumé*; and on GCpedia http://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/wiki/PWGSC_Human_Resources_Branch/Career_Management



Introduction to Cover Letters

The requirement to provide a cover letter with your résumé/application when applying for a position advertised on jobs.gc.ca has increased. The following are general guidelines to help you prepare an effective and relevant cover letter.

What is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is a business letter attached to your résumé/application for the purpose of introducing yourself, identifying the position of interest and highlighting your qualifications for the position. It can be used to highlight information, or provide comprehensive details, that are specific to the screening requirements of the position, such as education and experience, and as an opportunity to present additional relevant qualifications.

Include a Cover Letter? Or Not?

Cover letters are not required when applying for positions with the federal public service **unless** you are specifically requested to provide one. To determine if a cover letter is required, carefully review the instructions found in the job advertisement. Pay particular attention to the following sections: *Important messages*; *Information you must provide*; and *Other information*. You can also click on the “apply online” link in the job advertisement and follow the instructions provided. On the Job Applications page you will find a check list of all the steps you are required to complete in order to finalize your application. If a cover letter is required it will be listed here.



With private sector résumé/application submissions, it is strongly recommended that you include a cover letter whether one is requested or not.

The following are actual examples taken from jobs.gc.ca job advertisements. They provide very specific instructions regarding the submission of a cover letter.

- "It is your responsibility as a candidate to submit a cover letter which clearly outlines how you meet each of the screening qualifications (i.e. Education and Experience Qualifications, both Essential and Assets) as well as a Résumé which is linked to the information in your cover letter. The screening board cannot make any assumptions about your experience therefore it is not sufficient to only state the qualifications that are met or to provide a listing of current or past responsibilities. Rather, you **must** provide concrete examples which illustrate how you meet each qualification. One suitable approach is to use each screening qualification as a heading and provide a description outlining how that qualification is met. Failure to provide an appropriate cover letter may result in your application being rejected from the process."
- "In addition to your application, please include the following in your cover letter: Using the Education and Experience factors in both the Essential and Asset Qualifications as a header, please demonstrate in writing, with concrete examples, how you meet each qualification. Limit your responses to no more than 250 words per item and address only those items where you have the qualification requested."
- "Candidates **must** clearly demonstrate IN THEIR COVER LETTER how they meet the education and experience factors listed in the essential qualifications. Candidates **must** use the experience factors as a header and then write one or two paragraphs demonstrating how they meet the experience required. Resumes may be used as a secondary source to validate the experience described in the cover letter. Failure to provide this information in the requested format will result in your application being rejected. If candidates meet the education and/or experience factors listed in the Asset qualifications, they **must** also clearly demonstrate how they meet these experience factors in their cover letter as per the format identified in the Essential Qualifications to be considered."
- "Covering letter **must** be provided in addition to the résumé identifying clearly education and experience qualifications."
- "Candidates **must** clearly demonstrate how they meet the essential education and experience factors listed IN THEIR COVERING LETTER. Candidates should use the experience and education factors as a header and then write one or two paragraphs with concrete examples demonstrating how they meet the experience and education required. Resumes will be used to validate the experience and education listed in the cover letter. Failure to provide sufficient information may result in the candidate being screened out."
- "IMPORTANT NOTE: The Board suggests submitting a covering letter briefly outlining how you meet the education and experience qualifications (both essential and asset) as well as a resume supporting the information in your letter. Provide clear examples that illustrate how you meet each qualification -- do not merely state that the qualification is met or provide a listing of current or recent responsibilities."

Note: Although some of the above paragraphs do not specifically mention providing a résumé the expectation is that one will be included as part of your complete application.

When asked to provide a cover letter, be sure to follow ALL instructions in terms of how the assessment board wants the information presented e.g. use of headings, number of words or paragraphs, whether to address both essential and asset qualifications or essential only, inclusion of concrete examples, etc. If you are not instructed to include asset qualifications in the cover letter be sure to include them in your résumé.



Preparing to Write the Cover Letter

Cover letters should be specifically tailored to each position sought in order to demonstrate how your background and skills relate to the employer's specific needs. To write a good cover letter, it's important that you know and understand its purpose and audience, and that you pay close attention to its content, how it is organized, and its style. Consider the following when preparing to write your cover letter:

Time:

Leaving everything to the last possible moment may result in a less comprehensive, polished document. Therefore, remember to allocate sufficient time for planning, thinking of and recalling examples, researching, and validating the information you need or want to provide. You should also factor in the time needed to have someone review, proofread, edit, etc., and then proofread again after changes have been made.

Remember that you can access jobs.gc.ca from home but often times there is a requirement to complete an online questionnaire as part of the application. (**Important note:** When completing the online questionnaire and you are asked to provide details or examples to demonstrate how you meet a particular criteria it is not sufficient to state "see résumé or cover letter").

You may also have to contend with possible technical glitches.

Audience:

Your primary audience is the assessment board and/or hiring manager. Other audiences may include staffing professionals in the Human Resources branch of the department or at the Public Service Commission (PSC). The PSC and/or HR staff may be the first to review your application but they are not the final decision makers.

Content:

The information you include in your cover letter should be tailored to the position you are applying for. Use the job advertisement to help you determine which areas to focus on.

Abbreviations and acronyms are commonly used in the federal public service, as well as in most professions and industries. Be careful when using them. Use them if they are common or unique to the department or industry you are applying to. If not, or you are uncertain, spell out the word(s). Never assume that a commonly recognized/accepted acronym in one department means the same in other. For example, did you know OAS in PWGSC means "Office Accommodation Services", but in Service Canada it means "Old Age Security"?

When a cover letter is required follow all instructions provided in the job advertisement. The goal of your letter is to make it easy for the assessment board and/or hiring manager to see how you meet the qualifications they have specified. You must demonstrate clearly how you meet each one.

Note: The assessment board must be able to clearly see how your experience matches their criteria without having to read between the lines, make assumptions or fill in the gaps.

For more information on how to describe your experiences with concrete examples, at the level of detail the assessment board is seeking, refer to the [Writing Your Federal Government Résumé](#) handbook. (See Appendix C for information on accessing this handbook.) This handbook contains:

- an example of a résumé using the essential and asset experience criteria as headings (Appendix C);
- a list of action verbs, self-management skills, and transferable skills (Appendix A); and
- specific information on how to describe your experience (pages 2-5).

When a cover letter is not required you can decide whether or not to provide one.

If you choose to include one, remember that your résumé and cover letter should complement each other and work together to present you effectively to a perspective employer. There are 2 options you can consider when determining the type of cover letter you wish to include.

Option 1 - Follow the “one page” rule as favoured by the private sector. (Note: depending on the position you are applying for and your level and depth of relevant experience, your letter could be a page and a half to two pages **maximum** in length.)

This cover letter should draw attention to the most important information in the résumé, and provide new and relevant information for the reader. When using this option use the cover letter as an opportunity to:

If you choose to provide a cover letter, when one is not required, use it to add relevant/meaningful information to your application. Do not repeat information verbatim from your résumé.

- Briefly highlight the specific screening requirements of the position such as education and experience without going into specific details. (**Important** - in this case it will be critical that you address the specific details in your résumé. Failure to do so can result in your application being screened out of the selection process.)
- Present additional relevant qualifications, strengths and/or accomplishments;
- Stress what you have to offer the employer. You may also want to include information you know about the position, the branch or the department.
- Include important relevant information for which there is no room or place in the résumé; and/or
- Address some of the knowledge, abilities, interpersonal skills or competencies listed in the job advertisement. (Note: Typically, knowledge, abilities, interpersonal skills and competencies are assessed after the candidate’s application has been screened into the selection process. Therefore, the assessment board might not use your cover letter to assess these criteria unless the job advertisement specifies differently.)

See:

Example A (pg.6) Structure of a cover letter not being submitted online

Example B (pg.9) Structure of a cover letter being submitted online

Appendix B (pg.18) An example of a cover letter is included

When considering content, remember to focus on requested or relevant information only.

Option 2 - Even if the job advertisement does not request a cover letter you can still provide one that addresses **ALL** of the screening criteria, e.g. essential education and experience, and if applicable, asset education and experience.

Your goal with this cover letter is to take all of the relevant information/content/details that normally would have gone into your federal public service résumé and address them in a very comprehensive cover letter. You still need to provide a résumé, however, in this case you will use this shortened résumé:

- to validate and support the content of your cover letter; and
- capture any relevant information or pertinent details not included in the cover letter.

The assessment board would use **BOTH** your cover letter and résumé to determine if you have clearly demonstrated that you meet all the screening criteria.

See:

Example A (pg.6) Structure of a cover letter not being submitted online

Example B (pg.9) Structure of a cover letter being submitted online

Appendix A (pg.11) An example of a cover letter is included

Structuring the Cover Letter

Example A) Cover letter structure for a jobs.gc.ca job advertisement NOT being submitted online:

Use a standard business format. Key points can be italicized or a combination of bullets and boldfacing can be used to draw reader's attention to important information.

Heading

Your name
Your address with postal code

Date

Name of Contact
Person Title of Position
Organization
Street Address
City, Province, Postal Code

Whenever possible, address the letter to a specific person and use this name for the salutation. For internally advertised positions, a contact name is often provided and can be used here. It is less common to see a contact name in external advertisements.

Salutation

Dear (contact person):

If you are unable to find a name avoid using general salutations such as: Dear Sir or Madam; To Whom It May Concern; Dear Administrator, etc. In this situation consider omitting the salutation.

Subject line

Re: Position title, Group and Level, Department, Selection Process Number (if applicable)

Indicate the position you are applying for.

Opening Paragraph (The Reason for the Letter)

Use this paragraph to state the position you are applying for (if not mentioned in the subject line) and how you learned about it. You can begin this paragraph by using a:

- bold, catchy or clever but professional opening sentence that makes the reader want to continue reading;
- question that zeroes in on a high-need area of the employer;
- quotation to set the tone or provide insight into your work environment or your workplace values, attitude, or outlook.

The cover letter should accentuate what you can offer the organization, NOT what the organization can do for you.

You can also use it to:

- indicate that you are aware of what the organization is doing, wants to achieve, its mandate, or current initiatives;
- show enthusiasm for the position or organization;
- state why you want to work for the organization.

Provide the following information (if requested and not already included in résumé): substantive group, level, employment type, self-identification as member of Employment Equity group, PRI, preferred official language for the appointment process, etc.

Body or Middle Paragraph(s) (Providing Evidence)

Use this section to promote your value to the organization:

- clearly demonstrate, with examples, how you meet the essential/asset qualifications such as education and experience;

- if a cover letter has not been requested consider describing your abilities, personal suitabilities and competencies as specified in the job advertisement, or other information that you know or believe are relevant to the position. (However, remember that the board might not be able to use this information as part of their assessment.)

Substantiate your relevant qualifications and strengths by:

- using concrete examples and quantifiable results of accomplishments; high-profile projects; or instances of going above and beyond; and describe how they will transfer to the new position;
- stating other skills and attributes that you will bring to the job that parallel those needed to fill the position;
- using numbers to quantify accomplishments in dollar amounts or percentages;
- quoting testimonials, commendations, or evaluations that demonstrate your relevant qualifications;
- indicating how you can and will contribute to the organization and how your qualifications will benefit them;
- indicating other languages you are fluent in;
- linking how your real-work experience in an unrelated field helps qualify you for the current position.

The formatting of this section could include:

- writing several short paragraphs that separate and emphasize your relevant skills and strengths;
- using each screening qualification as a heading and providing a description(s) outlining how you meet these qualifications; or
- presenting important information in two corresponding columns: the employer's needs (or requirements) and your qualification.

Closing Paragraph

Books on writing cover letters suggest using this section to maintain control by indicating that you will phone later or follow-up. In the federal public service, **this is not necessary**.

- For jobs, advertised **externally** on jobs.gc.ca, the next steps are clearly identified: *Acknowledgement of receipt of applications will not be sent; only candidates successful in the screening process will be contacted. We thank all those who apply. Only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.*
- For jobs, advertised **internally** on jobs.gc.ca, you will be advised in writing (typically by e-mail) or by phone that you have been screened in. At that point, or later, you will be given details or instructions regarding next steps.

If you are eliminated from an advertised internal process at the screening stage, you will be advised by letter or email. Reasons for your elimination will be explained to you and may include one or more of the following:

- your résumé/application or cover letter did not demonstrate that you met the education or experience criteria;
- you were not within the area of selection;
- you missed the closing date;
- an Asset Qualification was used at the screening stage that you do not possess, or you did not address in your résumé/application or cover letter.

Therefore, use the closing paragraph to:

- say thank you for their time and consideration of your résumé/application;
- offer to provide more information if required;
- mention if you will be unavailable for a short period of time e.g. out of town on business or on holidays;
- provide current Personnel Psychology Centre (PPC) test score if job advertisement indicates that it will or may be used;

- list one or two phone numbers, best times to reach you, and an e-mail address. Even if this information is already in your résumé, including it again makes it easier for the assessment board to contact you

Ending the Letter

Examples: Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Respectfully, or Yours truly.

Your Signature - Sign the letter if possible. Your signature indicates that what you have written is true, complete and free of any false or fraudulent information. If you are submitting your application electronically e.g. as an email attachment, and are unable to provide a signature, you may be asked to provide a signature at some point later in the appointment process.

Your Name

Enclosure: Résumé

Example B) Structure of a cover letter being submitted online through jobs.gc.ca:

When using the “Apply Online” feature of jobs.gc.ca remember that the maximum character allotments set for résumés is 32,000; and for cover letters it is 99,990. The assessment board can set a **lower** maximum.

In consideration of this character allotment you may find it redundant to include your name, address, date, and subject line in the cover letter. You may have provided all of this information in your application form/profile. The same may be true for additional information such as substantive group, level, employment type, self-identification as member of Employment Equity group, PRI, preferred official language for the appointment process, your contact phone number(s) and email address, etc. There is no need to have the same information in two places. Remember, repeating this information in the cover letter will use up some of your character allotment.

Important Note: Online applications only accept 'plain text'.

When using jobs.gc.ca to submit your letter and résumé online, note that all formatting will be automatically stripped. Although the words will remain, the original look of your document will change significantly. Therefore, avoid using advanced formatting features such as bold, italics, underlines, colours, charts, graphics, fancy fonts, sizing, etc.



Tip: If you plan to submit your letter and résumé online but run into technical problems consider sending them as an email attachment. Include a read receipt so you have confirmation that your application was received by the closing date and time.

(If the job advertisement states that only online applications will be accepted, and time permitting, you should confirm that using this alternative method will be acceptable.)

Heading Same as Example A, pg.6, but exclude your name and address and the date.

Salutation Same as Example A, pg.6.

Opening Paragraph (The Reason for the Letter) Same as Example A, pg.6, with two exceptions. First, do not present important information in two corresponding columns. Keep your formatting “plain text”.

Second, do not include the following information if it is already included in your online profile, application or résumé: substantive group, level, employment type, self-identification as member of Employment Equity group, PRI, preferred official language for the appointment process, etc.

Body or Middle Paragraph(s) (Providing Evidence) Same as Example A, pg.6.

Closing Paragraph Same as Example A, pg.6.

Ending the Letter Same as Example A, pg.6, with one exception, do not repeat your contact phone number(s) and email address if you have included them in the online application form/profile.

Your Name, Typed (It is not possible to provide a signature. However you will be asked to confirm/declare online that what you have written is true, complete and free of any false or fraudulent information. You may be asked to provide a signature at some point later in the appointment process.

Enclosure: Résumé

Style

Your cover letter should reflect your professional workplace personality.

Do:

- (If no cover letter has been requested) Keep it brief, the general rule is a one-page cover letter.
- (If a cover letter is required) Pay attention to the specific instructions provided in the job advertisement.
- Use the same font type and size as the résumé for continuity.
- Make sure the information in your cover letter is relevant and informative.
- Use concise and direct language.

You can use the personal pronouns "I" and "my" in the cover letter because most of the information is about you, but use them correctly and sparingly.

Don't:

- Send a generic cover letter.
- Be longwinded - avoid wordy expressions.
- Sound desperate, embellish, tell white lies, or apologize.
- Talk about what you cannot do.
- Downplay experience or education. e.g. "I realize what you are asking for ..., but I only have...".
- Appear too pushy, overbearing, familiar or humorous.
- Refer to yourself in the third person.

Finishing Touches

Remember that your cover letter will probably be the first document the assessment board sees, making it your first opportunity to make a good impression. If your letter contains an embarrassing error or there are omissions, you could have erased a lot of the hard work and effort you put into preparing it and the complete résumé/application package.

Anyone can make spelling mistakes. Even the best authors use editors!

Editing

Cover letters are more challenging to write than résumés. With a résumé you can work with phrases, clauses, and lists. When writing the cover letter, your sentences must complement each other within the paragraphs and follow a meaningful sequence. Therefore, it is critical that you take every precaution to demonstrate proper writing skills. Check the cover letter carefully for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and typing errors, as well as clarity and consistency.

Remember to use **spell check!**



Prior to submitting your cover letter, ensure that it:

- is tailored to the job advertisement and, if applicable, all instructions were followed and that all required information has been included/addressed.
- is accurate, complete, concise, well-organized and easy to read; and
- uses proper grammar, has limited use of abbreviations and contains no spelling errors.

Note: Have someone else proofread your cover letter – sometimes a ‘fresh eye’ can catch errors or inconsistencies. This step is even more critical if the job advertisement includes any of the following statements:

For example the job advertisement may include any of the following statements:

-Please note the cover letter may be used to assess the ability to communicate effectively in writing.

-VERY IMPORTANT NOTE: Candidates MUST provide a cover letter as the cover letter and resume may be used to assess your ability to communicate effectively in writing

-Please note that in addition to all assessment methods, correspondence and communication in relation to this selection process may also be used to assess certain qualifications.

Be cautious when using a cover letter book as a guide. Many ‘how-to’ books includes examples of both well written and poorly written letters. Make sure that the example you are looking at is NOT an example of the latter. If you use the poorly written passages verbatim in your letter, you could sabotage yourself. This could also be seen as plagiarism.

Examples of Cover Letters

Two examples of cover letters have been included. The first, (Appendix A, pg.12), is for a situation where **both a cover letter and résumé are required**. The second, (Appendix B, pg.18), is an example of where a cover letter **is not required** but the candidate has chosen to provide one.



Although the following cover letter was written specifically for a fictitious Project Manager position with PWGSC Western Region it is intended to be relevant for as many PWGSC employees as possible. This cover letter addresses areas common to many roles and activities within PWGSC, such as: non PG contracting and contract management; managing projects; team leadership; supervision; managing financial and human resources; and providing advice, guidance and interpretation.

Scenario: The fictitious job advertisement, an EN-ENG-04 Project Manager, found below, was used to develop the cover letter. (The candidate’s background and experience were created for illustration purposes. The names of other government departments, locations, job titles and addresses are fictitious.)

Information you must provide

Your résumé

Candidates must clearly demonstrate IN THEIR COVER LETTER how they meet the education and experience factors listed in the essential qualifications. The screening board cannot make any assumptions about Candidates' experience. Candidates **should** use the experience factors as a header and then provide concrete examples demonstrating how they meet the experience and education required. If candidates meet the Asset education and/or experience factors listed, they must also clearly demonstrate how they meet these factors in their cover letter as per the format identified in the Essential Qualifications to be considered. Résumés will be used to validate the experience and education listed in the cover letter. Failure to provide sufficient information may result in the candidate being screened out.

In order to be considered, your application must clearly explain how you meet the following (essential qualifications)

Graduation with a degree from a recognized university in engineering relevant to the duties of the position.

Occupational Certification:
Eligibility for certification as a Professional Engineer in Canada

Essential Experience:

Experience in the field of engineering (e.g. as applied to buildings, roads).

Experience (minimum 5 years) in managing complex real property projects (minimum \$5 million) through planning, design, procurement and construction.

Experience in management of staff and/or multidisciplinary project teams.

Experience in providing advice, guidance and interpretation on a wide range of engineering and technical issues to senior management, clients, partners and/or stakeholders.

Experience in providing quality assurance to the activities of staff, consultants and contractors.

The following will be applied / assessed at a later date (essential for the job)

English essential

Ability:

Ability to lead and/or manage and motivate multi-disciplinary project teams.

Ability to prepare forecasts of time/costs, develop proposals for work, and monitor project budgets.

Ability to prioritize and meet deadlines.

Ability to analyze and make recommendations.

Ability to develop, plan and implement projects.

Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.

Competencies:

Client Service Orientation (Level 2)

Flexibility

Values and Ethics (Manager Level)

Engagement (Manager Level)

Management Excellence (Manager Level)

Strategic Thinking (Manager Level)

Conditions of Employment:

Possession of a valid driver's license.

Willing and able to work overtime.

Willing and able to travel.



Operational Requirements:

Requirement to travel using various modes of transportation including but not limited to: automobile, boat, plane, helicopter, Skidoo and/or ATV in order to access remote sites.
Requirement to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when participating in site visits throughout the region.

If you possess any of the following, your application must also clearly explain how you meet it (other qualifications)

Asset Qualifications:

Certification as a Professional Engineer
Project Management Institute certification as a Project Management Professional
Experience in managing financial resources.
Experience in office accommodation and fit up project

Tip: Use the Experience and Education requirements as headings and copy them verbatim. If you shorten, abbreviate or change them you risk changing the intent of the criteria causing you to omit key information. This could result in your application being screened out of the appointment process.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT THE FOLLOWING COVER LETTER:

- This candidate must provide the appropriate level of details, including examples, for an experienced Engineer and Project Manager. This job advertisement specifically states that screening will be based on the content of the cover letter. Therefore, the following letter is longer than 1 page and the depth and breadth of details provided is more than what a private sector employer typically looks for in a cover letter. If this candidate prepared a short, conventional cover letter, as generally favoured by private sector employers or as recommended in books this candidate risks being screened out.
- This candidate is still required to submit a résumé

The candidate must fully and adequately demonstrate the Essential Education, Occupational Certification and Experience (and applicable Asset Certification and Experience) in the cover letter. If details are omitted from the cover letter, the assessment board **is not** obligated to review the résumé or application for the missing information.

- No limit was set on the number of paragraphs or number of words.
- There is no requirement to address the Operational Requirements and Conditions of Employment in the cover letter as this candidate has done.
- This candidate did not address the knowledge, abilities, or competencies in this cover letter. Typically these criteria are assessed after the application, résumé and/or cover letter has been screened into the process.
- This candidate will be submitting this cover letter as an email attachment.

Tip: If you are not required to submit a cover letter you can still use the following example to prepare a comprehensive cover letter that addresses **all** the essential and **all** the applicable asset screening criteria. However, you **must** still provide an accompanying résumé tailored to the job advertisement and substantiating what is written in the cover letter. This format should enable the assessment board to fully screen you based on the content of your cover letter and use your résumé to validate and verify your information.

Erin Brown, P.Eng, PMP
003 - 00123 Street
Edmonton, Alberta W0W 0W0

May 16, 2016

Christian Parker
Human Resources Advisor
Public Works and Government Services Canada
000 - 0000 Kensington Street
Edmonton, Alberta Q0Q 0Q0

Dear Christian Parker:

Re: EN-ENG-04, Project Manager, Public Works and Government Services Canada, St. Albert, AB
Selection Process Number: 2016-SVC-IA-WWW-000000

I reviewed your advertisement for an EN-ENG-04, Project Manager with the Real Property Services branch with great interest. This cover letter clearly demonstrates how my professional and technical background and expertise matches the requirements of this position. My résumé has been attached.

I am a Civil Engineer with over 10 years directly related experience, six as an Indeterminate EN-ENG-03, Project Manager, with Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), Western Region and four with the City of Edmonton as a Project Leader. I have a proven record of accomplishments leading multidisciplinary teams, external contractors and managing and leading large, complex construction projects requiring the resolution of unique problems for diverse client groups. My experience includes performing all activities required to effectively manage financial and human resources in a client service oriented environment. This has resulted in progressive levels of responsibility and accountability.

The following highlights how my qualifications and competencies support your criteria:

Essential Education/Certification & Asset Certification

Graduation with a degree from a recognized university in engineering relevant to the duties of the position./Eligibility for certification as a Professional Engineer in Canada./Certification as a Professional Engineer./Project Management Institute certification as a Project Management Professional.

I obtained my Degree in Civil Engineering, with a specialty in Construction Management, from the University of Alberta. I am a Professional Engineer and have my Project Management Professional (PMP) certification from the Project Management Institute. I continue to complete professional studies required to maintain my Engineering and PMP certification and my leadership and management competencies. I am committed to continuous learning and professional excellence and have always supported the educational and professional development of my staff.

Experience

Experience in the field of engineering (e.g. as applied to buildings, roads).

Over the past 10 years, I have been involved in all phases of civil engineering projects ranging from \$100,000 to over 5 million dollar capital projects on behalf of both the federal and municipal governments. As a contributing team member, Project Leader or Project Manager, I have actively participated in all engineering activities ranging from concepts to sign-off, including construction supervision and technical assistance in support of project delivery. Projects I have been involved with, for the Department of AEG, includes the planning, design and construction of a Maintenance Facility in Churchill Falls, Manitoba; the conversion of a Warden's Cabin to a multi-person Warden's Office at Half Moon Lake in Hamilton National Park, Alberta; and the conservation of a recognised FHBRO building at Deep Lake in Jasper National Park, Saskatchewan. This work was done in collaboration with teams of in-house and contracted multi-disciplinary professionals, technical and non-technical employees, trades people and Alternative Forms of Service Delivery service providers. Additional projects for other departments have included laboratories, penitentiaries, housing and office accommodation.

Essential: Experience (minimum 5 years) in managing complex real property projects (minimum \$5 million) through planning, design, procurement and construction.

Asset: Experience in office accommodation and fit up projects.

For the past 6 years, in my role as Project Manager, I have been required to manage multiple complex multi-component construction projects concurrently. These projects are in a variety of locations throughout the Western Region and on occasion for two or more client departments. At any one time I could be managing up to 10 projects, all at varying degrees of completion and duration, ranging from three months to a year or multi-year projects lasting a minimum of two or more years. Complexities have included types of requirements, project scopes, geographic locations, and environmental and budget constraints. Other complexities include sensitive issues and situations such as accommodating the needs and specific requirements of community groups and environmental issues. Examples of concurring multi-year projects include real property and municipal infrastructure related projects, such as new development, redevelopment, rehabilitation and conservation projects, and major components of projects comprised of multi-faceted facilities, detachments, housing, office buildings, office accommodations, and training facilities. The value of each project ranged from 150k to 14 M.

For the past 5 years, I have been the designated Project Manager assigned to the construction program for the department of PQRS with projects in Alberta, Manitoba, the North West Territories and Saskatchewan. In collaboration with various project teams made up of in-house and contracted multi-disciplinary professionals, technical, non-technical and trades people, I ensure the effective planning, design, procurement, management and delivery of all construction projects. I accomplish this by identifying and clarifying client requirements; preparing/reviewing preliminary analyses; developing and analysing options; providing technical and professional advice and recommendations to ensure compliance; establishing strategies, plans and schedules; determining and coordinating financial, material and resource requirements; and preparing and designing project plans, estimates and budgets. In consultation with clients I negotiate and develop priorities, scope of service, fees, and formal work agreements. In partnership with the Acquisition branch, I prepare and evaluate tender and proposal calls; and select, negotiate and prepare contracts for goods and services. I coordinate, direct and monitor activities to ensure the effective implementation and integration of materials and resources. I lead, manage, coordinate and review the work of in-house and contracted professional, technical and non-technical multi-disciplinary teams and consultants; and I monitor and maintain financial and cost control of budgets, expenditures and contracts for the projects.

I maintain constant two-way communication throughout all projects. For example, I communicate expectations, goals and objectives to the clients, employees, contractors, consultants, and PWGSC management; I report to clients on progress against schedules, budgets and deliverables; and I plan, coordinate and chair meetings with contractors, clients, stakeholders, PWGSC management and staff to identify and resolve issues, share information, determine status of work in progress, and to deal with matters as they arise. I prepare complex and specialized reports, documents and correspondence such as briefing notes, project plans and schedules, agreements, approval documents, meeting minutes, and status and budget reports. I ensure that work sites are operated in accordance with federal, provincial and territorial construction and occupational health and safety acts, regulations and codes. I have a solid record of establishing and maintaining productive partnerships and working relationships with various stakeholders such as municipal, provincial and federal organizations, First Nations and community groups.

Another factor which contributes to my successful management of multiple projects is my expertise in procurement and the management and renewal of contracts for goods and services. As the Project Manager accountable for the delivery of a 5.7 million dollar construction project and a 11.1 million dollar office accommodation fit-up project, I procured and managed contracts for the services of a multi-discipline consulting firm and for electrical, mechanical and HVAC contractors. My contract management experience includes: determining scope of work and/or services; developing specifications and Terms of Reference; authorizing the commitment of funds; providing direction, monitoring and evaluating goods and services for conformance to contractual agreements; negotiating contract amendments; resolving contract disputes; ensuring contract requirements are met; monitoring, reviewing, and ensuring completed work is inspected; certifying receipt of services/goods; and certifying payment.

Experience in management of staff and/or multidisciplinary project teams.

I have managed staff, multidisciplinary and cross functional project teams in a client service environment. At the City of Edmonton, I managed, led and supervised a professional and technical resource unit of 12 employees involved in the delivery of construction services. I currently manage two technicians and one administrative support employee. My experience consists of monitoring day to day operations; ensuring goals and objectives were met; coordinating and assigning tasks; clarifying objectives; establishing individual and unit goals, priorities and performance expectations; providing ongoing performance feedback; guiding, coaching, mentoring, and training staff; and identifying and recommending training. I have also participated in the recruitment, assessment and selection of professional, technical and administrative staff; developed annual and multi-year work plans, in line with PWGSC's Vision, Mission and Strategic Outcome and the Western Region's Strategic Plan, ensuring that human and financial resources were available in order to meet all commitments.

As a Project Manager I manage and am accountable for the work performed by multi-disciplinary and cross functional teams made up of mechanical, electrical, structural or civil engineers; architects, landscape or conservation architects; interior designers; draftspersons; technical and trades people; computer, contracting and environmental specialists and administrative staff. I have managed teams consisting of in house employees from Real Property Services, Contracting/Acquisitions, ITSB, Finance, and Environmental Services; other government departments; and external contractors and consultants. Oftentimes, project team members were located in different centres across Western Region. I identify human resource requirements such as skill sets, competencies, and areas of expertise; establish and communicate team priorities, objectives, goals and timelines; coordinate and monitor the work to ensure technical/professional compliance with project requirements and terms of reference; manage performance expectations and provide feedback; and coordinate meetings to identify and resolve issues, share information, determine status of work in progress; and implement project amendments.

Experience in providing advice, guidance and interpretation on a wide range of engineering and technical issues to senior management, clients, partners and/or stakeholders.

I bring to my work a clear understanding and in depth knowledge of the engineering, architectural and technical services provided by PWGSC. I provide sound advice, guidance/support and interpretation of policies and procedures, and recommendations to the clients, project team members, consultants, contractor, other government departments and agencies, PWGSC management and senior management, other levels of government, Aboriginal communities/community governments, special interest groups and regulating bodies. Examples include: technical and professional services available; specific activities provided such as project planning, design, strategic planning, data analyses, cost estimates, budget and contract administration; identification of issues; clarification of roles and responsibilities; and the interpretation of acts, legislations, regulations, policies, legal and technical requirements and procedures. I brief senior and branch management on sensitive activities or transactions, explaining the critical issues, identifying the key players involved and suggest strategies to deal with potential political, media and public repercussions. I represent the branch/department at meetings with local interest groups. I meet with, or make presentations to, clients and potential clients in order to answer questions; to clarify federal real property legislation, legal obligations and procedures; to obtain agreement, approval and support; and to explain, guide, recommend, discuss and negotiate mutually acceptable solutions to contentious issues on behalf of the branch. I have also prepared and contributed to the preparation of Ministerial and executive briefings as well as Treasury Board Secretariat Submissions.

Experience in providing quality assurance to the activities of staff, consultants and contractors.

As Project Manager I provide quality assurance reviews throughout the duration of the projects. I provide technical and professional advice, and recommendations to ensure compliance. I conduct engineering investigations including feasibility studies, options, and risk analyses; and develop engineering design, plans, and specifications in compliance with relevant codes, standards, regulations and procedure. I follow industry, departmental and regional best practices to ensure procedures are carried out consistently, problems or areas of concern are identified and resolved, and I contribute to the continuous review and improvement of procedures and services. I provide direction to, and evaluate the work of, staff, consultants and contractors to ensure: the quality of services and goods provided; conformance to contractual agreements; resolution of contract disputes; completed work is inspected; and clients expectations were met or exceeded.

I diligently maintain project files and records to ensure an accurate audit trail in the event anyone may have to consult the file or assume responsibility for it at a later date.

Asset: Experience in managing financial resources.

I have extensive experience in forecasting, planning, preparing, managing and monitoring project and operational budgets. I manage, authorize and approve travel, and overtime expenditures against existing budgets. I use PBMS and SIGMA/SAP for updating, tracking, monitoring and controlling commitments, budgets and expenditures. I develop Specific Service Agreement's (SSA's), commit funds, and certify payment in accordance to the FAA and Government Contracting Regulations. I have negotiated contract amendments with consultants and contractors in order to obtain best value for the crown and fair value to the contractor.

Operational Requirements/Conditions of Employment.

I possess a valid Alberta driver's license and clean abstract. My current work requires that I travel by plane, helicopter, skidoo and ATV in order to access remote work sites; to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when participating in site visits throughout the Western Region; and be available to work additional hours during the week and weekends as required. These are conditions that I am still willing and able to meet.

I welcome the opportunity to interview for this position to expand on and learn more about how my skills, competencies, and accomplishments, can support and contribute to the work being done by your branch and PWGSC.

Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (bus) xxx-xxx-xxxx, erin.brown@pwgsc-tpsgc.ca, (cell) xxx-xxx-xxxx, or (res) ebrown@mail.com.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my candidacy.

Sincerely,

Erin Brown

Erin Brown, P. Eng., PMP
attachment: Résumé

Appendix B

For a Process NOT Requiring a Cover Letter

Scenario: The criteria below is part of a fictitious job advertisement for an AS 04 Operations Manager position and was used to develop the cover letter that follows. The criteria and candidate's background and experience were created for illustration purposes. The names, addresses, locations and job titles are fictitious. A cover letter was NOT requested. This candidate does not have a degree.

Important: This letter is not intended to get the candidate screened into the appointment process without a detailed résumé. It is an example of how this candidate prepared a targeted cover letter. The candidate chose to briefly address the essential education and **SOME** of the essential experience and **SOME** of the knowledge, abilities and personal suitabilities. The assessment board will not screen this candidate solely on what is in this cover letter. They will use **both the résumé and the cover letter**.

There is no requirement for the candidate to include knowledge, abilities and personal suitabilities. Typically these criteria are assessed after the application has been screened into the process.

Essential Education:

Successful completion of a secondary school diploma or an acceptable combination of education, training and relevant experience

Essential Experience:

Experience in managing the day to day operations in a client service environment
Experience in coordinating and administering activities or projects or programs
Experience in providing advice and recommendations to management and clients
Experience in managing financial and human resources

Knowledge:

Knowledge of contract and project administration

Ability:

Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing

Personal Suitability:

Client Service Orientation
Leadership
Effective Interpersonal Relationships

Taylor Jones
153 Rapids Way
Seashore, Manitoba Q0Q 0Z0

May 26, 2016

Sharon Smyth
Human Resources Advisor
Public Works and Government Services Canada
000 - 0000 Wellington Ave
Seashore, Manitoba Q0Q 0Q0

Dear Sharon Smyth:

Re: AS 04, Operations Manager, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Churchill, Manitoba
Selection Process Number: 2016-SVC-IA-XXX-00000

Your advertisement for an AS04 Operations Manager captured my attention. Upon comparing my background against the essential qualifications of the position I believe you will find me to be a strong, enthusiastic, and qualified candidate. To assist with your deliberation, I submit this letter and attached résumé which provides specific details of how my training and extensive professional background and achievements parallel those identified in your advertisement.

As an Indeterminate AS 3, Chief of Operations, with Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), I have a proven record of accomplishments in leading and managing the Western Region's Corporate Services unit. This includes performing all activities required to effectively manage financial and human resources, in a client service oriented environment, specifically in the areas of program and project coordination, administration and delivery.

My five years of progressively responsible experience is comprised of, amongst other things, developing and monitoring budgets; the life cycle management of assets including procurement, inventory control, maintenance and disposal; managing daily operations including supervising, leading and coordinating staff in the delivery of services to both internal and external clients; and project and contract administration. By prioritizing tasks, managing my time and resources, and communicating with those I report to, as well as those who report to me, I have been successful in maximizing the desired deliverables and client service results in a very fast-paced and demanding environment.

I meet the essential education requirement and have augmented it with extensive experience and the successful completion of the following Canada School of Public Service courses: Essentials of Managing in the Public Service (G110), Essentials of Supervising in the Public Service (G124), Project Management (R9011) and HR Planning (P7020). I have my PWGSC Staffing Delegation of Authority. My professional development has been further supplemented by additional courses and seminars in finance, leadership, HR, project management and contract administration.

I have significant experience in managing, planning, analysing, developing and implementing the day to day operations of a complex and demanding work unit. I often manage multiple projects from the identification of requirements, the establishment of project teams, determining resource requirements to ensuring the project has been successfully completed. I have experience in all areas of the procurement cycle from requirement definition to contract management. I am required to establish and manage service contracts; I also negotiate contract amendments and renewals. My accomplishments in these areas are a result of my ability to apply my comprehensive knowledge of contract and project administration principles and procedures.

I provide advice and recommendations to management, staff, clients and other stakeholders on service delivery, interpretation and the application of regulations, policies, directives, and legislation. I am able to critically review documents and provide clear and concise assessments both verbally and in written

reports. I have extensive experience in financial management (salary and non-salary) including forecasting, preparing, planning and monitoring operational budgets.

I manage and provide leadership to a staff of 30 employees and four supervisors. This includes establishing goals and expectations; assigning tasks; ensuring all operational requirements are met; providing feedback on work performance; coaching; and mentoring. I have also developed the unit's annual and multi-year work plans and ensured that human and financial resources were available to meet the objectives of the work plans.

I am excited about the opportunity to interview for this position, and to learn more about your expectations. I am confident that my competencies and accomplishments will enable me to make an immediate contribution to your branch and PWGSC. Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (bus) xxx-xxx-xxxx, taylor.jones@pwgsc-tpsgc.ca, (res) xxx-xxx-xxxx, or tjones@tele.com.

Thank you for taking the time to review my qualifications.

Sincerely,

Taylor Jones

Taylor Jones
attachment: Résumé

Contacts

- For questions regarding an internal advertised process contact the person or email address listed at the end of the job advertisement.

PWGSC Western Region Career Management Handbooks

- *Writing Your Federal Government Résumé*
- *Writing Your Federal Government Cover Letter*

Electronic copy – There are three options for accessing electronic copies:

1. *The WiRE*

- Go to <http://intranet.wst.pwgsc.gc.ca/>;
- At PWGSC Services (drop box), select **HR Site**;
- Select **Learning and Career**;
- Select **Career Management**;
- Under Other Resources, select **Western Region Résumé and Cover Letter Handbooks**

2. Follow the URL:

<http://intranet.wst.pwgsc.gc.ca/PWGSCServices/HumanResources/LearningandCareer/CareerManagementServices/ResumeandCoverLetterHandbooks>

3. GCpedia:

http://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/wiki/PWGSC_Human_Resources_Branch/Career_Management

Hardcover copies are also available in the Western Region Human Resources Library.

Books

Books on résumés, cover letters and interview preparation are available from the Western Region Human Resources Library. To search the inventory, go to:

<http://intranet.wst.pwgsc.gc.ca/PWGSCServices/HumanResources/LearningandCareer/Learning/HRLibrary/HRLibrarySearch>

Web Sites

- jobs.gc.ca – One source for Public Service job opportunities.
- Additional definitions for terminology used in this handbook and on job advertisements, refer to: <http://www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/abt-aps/gls/index-eng.htm>