

# Continuous Recruitment

Factsheets

APS recruitment

## Overview

Continuous recruitment, also known as consecutive or sequential recruitment, is where an APS agency conducts continuous successive recruitment processes for the same vacancy or vacancies.

Each successive selection process, also known as a recruitment ‘round’, is advertised with a vacancy notification date in the PS Gazette and a specified closing date. These rounds are usually run in close succession and each candidate is assessed against other candidates who have applied in that round.

An example of continuous recruitment is where a vacancy is notified on 1 May with a closing date of 31 May and, at that closing date, all candidates from that ‘round’ are comparatively assessed against each other in accordance with the merit principle. The vacancy is readvertised on 1 June with a closing date of 30 June, and so on.

## Continuous vs rolling recruitment

Continuous recruitment is different from ‘rolling’ or ‘anytime’ recruitment.

Rolling recruitment is where candidates are assessed and offers are made whilst a vacancy is still open for applications. The vacancy may be open for a long period of time, or permanently, during which an agency short-lists and interviews candidates. Candidates are offered roles at any time a vacancy occurs.

However, rolling recruitment **does not** meet the requirements of a merit-based process because all candidates are not assessed against each other using a competitive selection process. In a rolling recruitment process it is not possible to assess all candidates who have applied against each other, as candidates are assessed and offered roles at any time. The assessment is only on each candidate’s individual capability, but not their relative suitability compared to each other.

Rolling recruitment increases the risk of cronyism or nepotism, as all candidates are not competitively assessed against one another. For example, the delegate thinks their friend will be suitable to work in their team. They advertise a role, suggesting their friend submit their application on the first day. No other applications are received on the first day and so the delegate assesses their friend, finds them suitable and offers them the role, not considering any other applicants.

An example of a rolling recruitment process is the use of a temporary employment register. This type of recruitment process is not a full merit-based process and therefore can only be used to recruit candidates for non-ongoing roles. For further information see [Non-ongoing and irregular or intermittent employment.](https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/information-aps-employment/guidance-and-information-recruitment/non-ongoing-and-irregular-or-intermittent-employment)

To be consistent with merit, candidates can only be assessed and offered roles at the conclusion of the advertised period.This is because the merit principle requires that candidates are assessed comparatively against each other.

## Why use continuous recruitment?

Continuous recruitment provides agencies with a continuous presence in the recruitment market and maximises agency visibility to potential candidates. Continuous recruitment can also be effectively used in circumstances where an agency is frequently seeking to fill the same roles.

Continuous recruitment offers increased opportunities for candidates to apply for a vacancy. This benefits an agency by increasing the number of applicants over time and potentially increasing the merit pool of suitable candidates.

### Continuous recruitment and merit pools

An agency can create a merit pool of suitable candidates from each round, establishing multiple merit pools from which to draw, ensuring a pipeline of suitable candidates to meet the agency’s operational needs. It is important to note that the merit pool is not ‘topped up’ each round but rather a new merit pool is created at the conclusion of each round. Selection of candidates from the merit pools must continue to meet the requirements of merit.

Agencies should consider how to effectively communicate with candidates regarding creation and use of merit pools. When advertising vacancies through continuous recruitment it would be helpful to advise candidates that multiple rounds will be conducted and that is it is not necessary for candidates to apply to multiple rounds. Details on how the merit pool will be used should be included and that successful candidates will remain in the merit pool. However, candidates cannot be prevented from applying for multiple rounds.

It is not necessary to exhaust each merit list or pool before accessing another. However, agencies are encouraged to consider existing merit pools before accessing a new merit pool.

## Ensuring consistency with merit

### Planning

Proper planning by human resources practitioners and selection panels will ensure that each cohort of candidates is properly assessed. This entails allocating distinct timeframes to each round and to each assessment process. In all instances each cohort should be assessed separately in each successive round. This will assist agencies to competitively assess candidates in line with the merit principle.

### Record-keeping

When undertaking continuous recruitment, agencies should consider how to effectively manage the different merit lists or pools that are generated from each recruitment round.

Each merit list or pool is independent of other rounds. However, for ease of use, when making a selection decision, they can be provided in a combined document (such as spreadsheet) with the expiry date for the merit list or pool clearly recorded.

### Communication and candidate care

It is important that APS agencies consider the ways in which they maintain effective communication with candidates during the recruitment process, particularly for candidates who see future rounds advertised and may be concerned that they have been unsuccessful or are no longer being considered for engagement.

Merit-based selection processes also require agencies to make information about the selection process readily available to candidates. Agencies should include information in each advertisement about how the rounds will operate and merit pools will be used.

## Further information

The APSC have developed [Recruitment factsheets, case studies and templates](https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/information-aps-employment/guidance-and-information-recruitment/aps-recruitment-guide/recruitment-factsheets-case-studies-and-templates)  to support recruitment in the APS. Further information is also available in the [APS Recruitment Guide](https://www.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-07/Recruitment%20in%20the%20APS.docx).