

Data Trust & Ethics Committee 29 August 2024

Item: 4

Consideration of Recruitment Tools, Vervoe and CriteriaCorp

For decision: Approval

Purpose:

For the Data Trust & Ethics Committee (DTEC) to endorse the use of the following tools to support large scale recruitment processes:

- Vervoe (bespoke assessment)
- CriteriaCorp

Recommendations:

That the DTEC Endorse:

1. the use of two specific recruitment tools (Vervoe and CriteriaCorp).
2. a blanket approval for similar recruitment tools with established guardrails, eliminating the need for individual approval.

Established guardrails

Privacy and security guardrails:

- Data stored in Australia e.g Amazon Web Services Sydney
- ISO27001 (International Information Security Standards) certified
- Comply with GDPR, Australian Privacy Legislation and Australian Cyber Security Centre Standards
- Does not use AI in decision-making or when it does, it uses explainable machine learning AI (Vervoe)

General recruitment and bias guardrail:

- One tool will not serve as the sole assessment method.
- Reasonable adjustments where candidates require a reduction of barriers
- RecruitAbility – reduction of barriers for those with disability
- Reduced benchmark options for diverse cohorts

The DTEC Discuss:

1. When recruitment tools need to be re-assessed by DTEC?
Example, SOVA and Referroo were reviewed in Oct 2023. What are the parameters that define a reassessment?

About the tools specific to this request:

- All recruitment assessment questions and responses are designed by Services Australia Panels/SME's. All questions and responses relate to the capabilities or skills required for the advertised role/s and are explainable and defensible.
- CriteriaCorp - one-way video interview tool. The interview is recorded by candidate in the Criteria platform, and responses are assessed by Services Australia panel members. There is no use of AI, no decision making by the tool.
- Vervoe - a bespoke version of an online skills assessment tool that is used to assess candidates against the capabilities of the advertised role. Vervoe tool enables assessment of candidate against a series of questions which have been designed, tested and optimised by Services Australia SME's.
 - Bespoke refers to the total design of the product, we turned off elements of AI, for example assessing how quickly a candidate responds.

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- **Design:** Services Australia SME's draft questions and responses to assess capability. A mix of binary, multiple choice, free text, audio and video response questions may be used to mitigate bias in candidates preferred response types. **Section 47G**
- **Test:** Services Australia SME's receive the Vervoe assessment in a test platform and refine questions to ensure an optimal candidate experience.
- **Optimise:** Services Australia SME's scores completed assessments and teaches the AI what good, medium and poor responses looks like. The tool learns variances and is not looking for 'keywords'. The SME's continue to score candidates until the tool is 'optimised' (i.e. it understands how to score according to our parameters).
- **Quality assurance:** Following the machined learning assessment, Services Australia SME's assess a series of responses to ensure they are comfortable with how the AI has assessed. This may involve reviewing 20 of the top rater responses, 20 of the bottom rated responses and a series of those in the middle.

Where there are anomalies, Services Australia SMEs will undertake additional optimisation to further teach the machined learning.

Key Points:

The recruitment team engages external providers to manage processes that may attract large candidate numbers (10,000 applicants).

Once engaged, the external recruitment providers suggest the most appropriate tool dependant on the capabilities/skills being assessed. Services Australia recruitment team stresses the importance that the use of these tools adhere to the Agency's Data Governance Framework, supporting trusted and ethical thinking, checking assumptions, encourages transparency and ensures accountability for decision-making.

1. Adhere to relevant legislation and policy
 - a. Upon submission of a Privacy Threat Assessment, legal advice is provided by way of Privacy Assessment Advice (PAA). National Recruitment team adhere to implications of:
 - i. Collection, use and disclosure of personal information by third party providers on behalf of Services Australia.
 - ii. Security and storage of personal information by third party providers.
 - b. We will confirm with the recruitment providers and the online tool providers that:
 - i. personal information will only be used and disclosed for the purposes of assessing candidates for the roles advertised, unless advised otherwise by Services Australia;
 - ii. information collected for the recruitment round will be securely stored within Australia;
 - iii. all personal information collected as part of the recruitment round will be destroyed as soon as practicable after the recruitment process has concluded.
 - c. Our recruitment providers are engaged through a government tender process and are engaged per recruitment process where required under contract. The recruitment provider suggests the use of recruitment tools specific to the talent attraction methodology.
 - d. Both Vervoe and CriteriaCorp store data in Australia - Amazon Web Services Sydney
 - e. The online platforms adhere to relevant privacy, security and data legislation and codes of practice for use within Australia.
 - o CriteriaCorp meets SOC/ISO27001 and are GDRP compliant.
[SCCertificateRebrandA4Portrait \(criteriacorp.com\)](https://www.criteriacorp.com/SCCertificateRebrandA4Portrait)
 - o Vervoe meets SOC/ISO27001 and are GDRP compliant.

2. *Maintain the privacy, security, accuracy and integrity of data and its appropriate and proportionate use*

- a. As noted in point 1. above, a PTA and legal advice via PAA received.
- b. As noted in point 1. above, confirmation from provider on data management to ensure the correct data management.
- c. Candidates provide personal data to participate in the recruitment process via their application. Data is extracted from the e-recruitment portal and uploaded into the online platform by the recruitment provider to facilitate online assessments to candidates (first name, last name and email address). This information identifies the person undertaking the assessment and ensures candidate results are linked to the correct person. Responses allow us to assess capability and progress candidates through assessment stages as appropriate.

3. *Seek fairness, equity and diversity while mitigating bias and discrimination*

- a. We are committed to ensuring candidates all have equal opportunity. Each recruitment activity includes RecruitAbility measures and reasonable adjustment arrangements that candidates can request to reduce barriers dependant on their individual requirement.
- b. The Australian Government provides reasonable adjustments or flexibilities during the hiring process for all vacancies, whether you opt into RecruitAbility or not or whether it is an Affirmative measures job or not. This includes access, equipment or other practical help.
- c. This could include things such as an Auslan interpreter for an applicant who is hearing impaired, extra reading time during assessment activities for a person with learning difficulties, or accessible software for a person with vision impairment.
- d. The online skill assessment may use machine learning, as part of the learning process. Where applicable, Services Australia representatives come together as a group to assess responses and work together to determine what a good, medium and poor answer looks like. Recruitment refer to this part of the process as optimisation.

A diverse group of representatives are involved in the optimisation process including males, females and a member of the diversity and inclusion team.

- e. Candidates are provided with various contact methods should they have questions, i.e. technical issues. Candidates can make direct contact with representatives of the recruitment tool and our external provider. Where requested any concerns are raised and unable to be addressed the Services Australia recruitment team is involved in any correspondence or decision making.
- f. Data Analytics Division representatives met with Vervoe technical engineers in September 2023 to understand:
 - i. How the Vervoe platform operates and the 'mechanics behind it', particularly in relation to how AI is used in a recruitment context.
 - ii. How we design and optimise the training of the tool, with considerations given to aspects such as bias, transparency and 'explainability' of results.
- g. *CriteriaCorp one-way video interview tool captures a recording of the candidate responses to interview questions. Human panels will assess the interview responses.*

4. *Exemplify competence and accountability*

- a. Refer to competence and accountability of the tools [previously noted](#).
- b. External recruitment provider is engaged to facilitate the use of third-party tools when used in a recruitment processes.
- c. Services Australia SME's are engaged to plan the recruitment process, and to design, test and optimise tools (where relevant).

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- d. The Job Pack and candidate notifications detail:
 - i. information about assessment methodologies
 - ii. the tools used (where relevant)
 - iii. a point of contact for technical queries
 - iv. assessment feedback to candidates
- e. National recruitment in consultations with the delegate will be responsible for all decisions. This includes:
 - i. Extension requests
 - ii. Assessment benchmarks
 - iii. Shortlisting decisions
 - iv. Suitability of candidates with integrity matters or adverse referee comments.
- f. Australian Public Servants may request reviews of decisions or actions relating to employment in the (APS).
- g. Candidates can provide feedback
- h. Processes have been designed in line with previous learnings.

5. Retain human oversight and regularly test reliability

- a. Refer to information about the tools [previously noted](#).
- b. Refer to discussion point. Seeking guidance about the need for re-evaluation by DTEC on tools already 'passed'.
- c. National Recruitment propose that prior to using a previously passed tool, a review of technical updates, data and privacy certifications are reviewed to ensure the data trust and ethics principles and legal advice still apply.
- d. Candidates may approach the recruitment provider and/or the contact officer during the recruitment process with concerns about the process and/or tools used. The explainability and transparency of the process and tools are mitigated through candidate communication such as the Job pack, notifications, links to tools and responding to candidate enquiries. There is a technical contact point for each tool, as well as the recruitment provider contact point.
- e. Public trust is mitigated by candidates understanding the process and tools as per point above.

6. Advance human centred design and serve the public interest

- a. Refer to information about the tools [previously noted](#).
- b. The use of online system tools is an efficient and cost-effective way to assess candidates in a large-scale recruitment process.
- c. Completion of a recruitment process within a timely manner enhances the reputation and integrity of the agency as an employer of choice.
- d. The spending of public monies is a critical consideration when engaging a provider. A competitive quote process is undertaken with approved providers to ensure ethical decisions are applied when selecting a provider and tools before committing to spending public monies.

7. Provide individuals with proportionate levels of management over data that relates to them

- a. Candidates are provided with links to the assessment platforms where they can view information on privacy and data storage.
- b. Recruitment provider and recruitment team are available to respond to candidate queries in regard to privacy and data storage.

8. Promote understanding and transparency of data initiatives

- a. Online assessments pose a risk that some candidates may not complete assessments themselves, but may have someone else complete on their behalf. Another negative may be that candidates

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assume the use of AI when only a capturing tool is being used. Both can be mitigated by consistent messaging to candidates.

Risks and issues:

Recruitment exercises can be completed within an appropriate timeframe, ensuring suitable candidates are available for vacant positions as they arise and to address critical incidents where large number of employees are required at short notice.

Online assessments pose a risk that some candidates may not complete assessments themselves, but may have someone else complete on their behalf. Another negative may be that candidates assume the use of AI when only a capturing tool is being used. Both can be mitigated by consistent messaging to candidates.

Next Steps:

Once recruitment approval has been obtained, we will work with the provider to develop and test assessment tasks.

Consultation:

On 14 September (11:00-12:00) a discussion was facilitated between Vervoe representatives and Services Australia staff, including GM - Data and Analytics, NM – Data Strategy and Governance and other subject matter experts. From this discussion

- there was a consensus that Vervoe was fine to continue using during the pilot.
- It was confirmed that data was stored with AWS in Sydney.

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Background:

Large scale recruitment exercises attract very high volume of candidates. Undertaking 'typical' assessment (application/interviews) can be extremely time consuming; the use of recruitment tools allows us to complete our recruitment activities efficiently and consistently avoiding lengthy wait times which can cause angst, anxiety and frustrations amongst candidates causing a poor candidate experience.

- Criteria recruitment tool has been used in previous recruitment processes to collect candidate responses. It is a digitally friendly tool that is easy for candidates to navigate. It only collects candidates name and email address. Questions hosted in the tool are designed by Services Australia staff bespoke to Services Australia requirements based on the recruitment process.
- The Vervoe recruitment tool has been used in various recruitment exercises including our recent APS3/4 pilot (total of 13 processes).

Section 47G

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