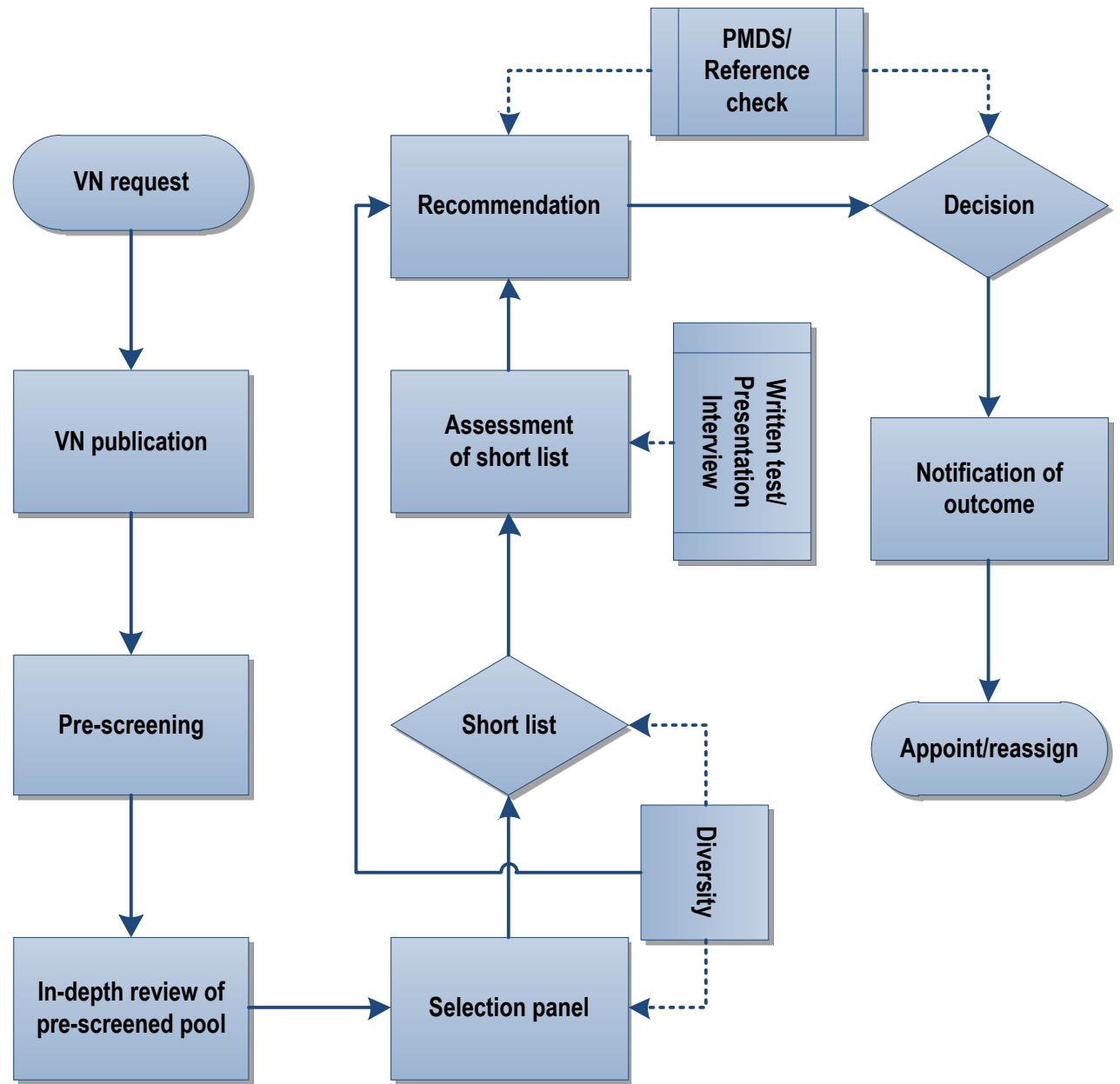


# Harmonized selection process

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*Fixed-term positions for  
Locally recruited staff*

\*\*\* 2014

**Figure 1: Process flow**

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## I. Introduction

### DEFINITION OF CONTEXT AND SCOPE

1. In the context of the WHO selection process, harmonization may be defined as the adjustment of differences and inconsistencies among different methods and procedures, in order to make them uniform or mutually compatible. Harmonization provides for the prevention or elimination of differences in the process and sets boundaries to the degree of their variation. While there are aspects of the process where harmonization may not be fully achievable due to the individual structures and environments, every effort must be made to harmonize the process to the maximum.
2. For the purposes of this paper, the fixed-term selection process is considered to be from receipt of a vacancy notice request through to the initiation of an action to appoint or reassign the selected candidate to the vacant position (Figure 1). Currently, while the overall process is common to all regions, it is complex and involves many different steps, most of which are conducted outside of any supporting system (for example, GSM, e-Recruitment) and provide opportunities for divergence.

### OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED OUTCOME

3. The objective of this paper is to propose a harmonized global competitive process for the selection of staff for longer-term positions in the General Service and National Professional Officer categories (hereafter termed locally recruited staff), which will ensure consistency, efficiency and transparency in staffing the Organization.
4. It is expected that a harmonized selection process would provide a) a set of process standards across the Organization, b) a more streamlined process, c) increased transparency, d) strengthened WHO “brand”, and e) an improved candidate experience.

## II. Guiding principles

### GENERAL

5. The selection of fixed-term locally recruited staff should be made in the best interest of the Organization and in accordance with its policies and regulations. The selection process should be fair, transparent and objective.
6. The final selection of fixed-term locally recruited staff, will be made by the relevant decision-maker, based on a recommendation made by a Selection Panel (see Paragraph 52).
7. Locally recruited staff are encouraged to apply to international positions through a competitive process, with the knowledge, however, that (i) they are subject to mobility and (ii) their first assignment cannot be in their home country.

## CANDIDATE PRIORITY, PREFERENCE AND CONSIDERATION

8. Of paramount importance in the selection process is the recruitment of staff with the highest standard of competence, efficiency and integrity (Staff Regulation 4.2). In this context, selection of staff members shall be without regard to race, creed or sex.
9. Internal candidates are those holding a current WHO staff contract of a temporary, fixed term or continuous nature.
10. In the spirit of adopting harmonized practices across the UN, local staff from other UN agencies are recognized as internal candidates on a reciprocal basis only and without prejudice to the legal implications in cases of restructuring, downsizing and re-profiling.
11. Without prejudice to the inflow of fresh talent at the various levels, vacancies shall be filled by persons already in the service of the United Nations in preference to persons from outside.
12. In accordance with Staff Rule 1050.5.2, staff members shall be given due preference for vacancies during the reassignment period, within the context of Staff Rule 1050.4. Under e-Manual III.10.11.230, a staff member whose position has been abolished and who wishes to be considered for positions at a higher grade must apply and compete with other applicants in accordance with established selection procedures with due preference given to him or her during the reassignment period within the context of Staff Rule 1050.3. If assessed by the Selection Panel as meeting the minimum requirements of the position, due preference requires that the staff member is included in any testing or interview, or is interviewed if no preliminary tests are being conducted. The Secretary of the Reassignment Committee informs the HRO/RPO, as Secretary of the relevant Selection Panel, accordingly. In addition, staff members whose appointments have been terminated in the context of a reassignment process, whose service has been fully satisfactory, and who wish to be considered for vacancies during the 12 months following their separation, are considered for vacancies for which they are qualified in preference to equally qualified external candidates.

## DIVERSITY

13. WHO is committed to providing equality of access to employment, advancement and retention in the Organization, recognizing that it is in the Organization's interest to recruit and maintain a diverse and skilled workforce that is representative of the diverse nature of society, for example persons with disabilities.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

14. The confidentiality of the selection process is of paramount importance and must be fully respected by all parties. The deliberations and discussions of the Selection Panel are strictly confidential and should not be disclosed outside the Panel, either immediately after the meetings or at any later stage. A breach of confidentiality may lead to the imposition of disciplinary measures.

## FAMILY AND SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIPS

15. Selection Panel members should be aware that:

- a. appointment shall not be granted to a person who is related to another staff member under Staff Rules 410.3 (father, mother, son daughter, brother, sister), except where another person equally well-qualified cannot be recruited;
- b. the spouse of a staff member may be appointed provided that the spouse is fully qualified for the position and provided that the spouse is not given any preference for appointment by virtue of the relationship to the staff member.
- c. a staff member who is related to another staff member under Staff Rule 410.3 (father, mother, son, daughter, brother or sister) and Staff Rule 410.3.1 (spouse) shall not be assigned to serve in a position which is superior or subordinate in the line of authority to the position occupied by the staff member to whom he or she is related;
- d. a staff member who is related to another staff member as specified under the Staff Rules 410.3 and 410.3.1 shall not participate in the process of selection, assignment, reassignment or transfer of the related staff member.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

16. Where upon receipt of the background materials for a selection, a Panel Member becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest with regard to a candidate under consideration, another Selection Panel Member, or any aspect of the process where the Panel Member's ability to be entirely objective may be compromised, the issue must be immediately brought to the attention of the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist. A further opportunity to declare a potential conflict of interest is provided at the opening of the first meeting of the Selection Panel. When required, the issue may be referred for decision to Director, HRD at headquarters and to Director, Administration and Finance in the Regions.
17. If at any point during the process, a Selection Panel Member becomes aware that he/she or another Selection Panel Member has a relationship with any of the short-listed candidates that could be construed as grounds for partiality (that is, blood relation, partnership, marriage or any other family or personal relationship that may impede impartial judgment), he/she should immediately inform the Regional HR Manager/ HR Specialist. The same applies to any Selection Panel Member who has a family or personal relationship with any other Selection Panel Member. When required, the issue may be referred for decision to Director, HRD at headquarters and to Director, Administration and Finance in the Regions.
18. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest may lead to the imposition of disciplinary measures.
19. Short-listed candidates are informed of the Selection Panel composition as soon as the short list is confirmed. Any perceived conflict of interest should be raised with HR within 48 hours. The Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist will discuss the perceived conflict of interest with the other Selection Panel Members and take the necessary steps to find a replacement, if required.

### **III. Advertising vacancies**

#### **VACANCY NOTICE**

20. Before initiating a request to issue a vacancy notice, the Hiring Manager will ensure that the position description is up-to-date and in line with the approved HR Plan. It is recommended that special care and attention are given to the

recruitment profile of the position, and that the advice and guidance of the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist is sought in this regard. The requirements and competencies indicated in the recruitment profile are crucial and will be used for the vacancy notice, and subsequently for the screening and assessment of applicants. Since vacancy notices reflect the content of a duly approved and classified position description, and are verified by the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist as such, additional clearance of draft vacancy notices is not required. HR Assistants are accountable for the quality of the vacancy notices they publish in the knowledge that the purpose of these is to attract the best candidates.

21. Vacancy notices will indicate the potential to fill multiple positions of a similar profile at the same grade level, including those of a temporary nature, for a period of 12 months. In the course of a selection process, all recommended qualified candidates should be retained for consideration for similar positions at the same grade level, without the issuance of a further vacancy notice or candidate assessment. Pre-qualified candidates of this kind should be presented to the Hiring Manager for consideration once the vacancy is identified and in advance of issuing a VN. In event that the Hiring Manager does not select from among this pre-qualified pool of candidates, a VN will be issued. A candidate's profile will remain active in this category for a period of 12 months from the date of the approval of the Selection Panel's recommendation. A prequalification of this kind does not constitute any obligation or commitment on behalf of the Organization to appoint, reassign or promote a candidate to a similar position. The VN will include standard text to this effect.
22. Vacancy notices are advertised using the eRecruitment platform internally and externally, or through appropriate local media, such as in the press, for a minimum of 10 working days. Publishing common vacancy announcements through local media with one or more UN agency can be considered. In such cases, applicants will nevertheless apply to each agency individually.
23. All vacancy notices advertised through eRecruitment are issued in English, and may be advertised in another language depending on the target audience.

#### **OUTREACH**

24. The Hiring Manager is responsible for ensuring wide dissemination of the vacancy notice through various media (such as, journals, UN and social networks, job sites). In consultation with the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist, the Hiring Manager considers the options available. Related costs are borne by the hiring department.

#### **IV. Selection Panel**

25. Diversity among the members of the Selection Panel in terms of geographical origin and gender representation is desirable. The participation of the representative of the staff (designated by the Staff Association) and of the Regional HR Manager/ HR Specialist is not restricted by grade. The remaining Panel members shall be at a grade not lower than that of the position to be filled. The Independent Panel Member and Staff Representative are identified from departments other than the department in which the vacant position is located.

26. It is desirable that all Selection Panel members will have received a comprehensive briefing by the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist on the selection process, and will have undergone training in competency-based and gender-sensitive interviewing techniques.

### PANEL COMPOSITION FOR HEADQUARTER AND REGIONAL OFFICES

27. The standard Selection Panel is composed of four members, as follows:

- the Hiring Manager, normally responsible for chairing the Panel;
- a representative of the staff designated by the Staff Association;
- an Independent Panel Member, preferably with technical knowledge of the subject area of the vacant position, from another cluster or department identified by the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist;
- Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist or their representative.

28. Each of the above has full panel member status and is required to sign the Selection Report. The roles and responsibilities of the Selection Panel Members are detailed in Annex 2.

### PANEL COMPOSITION FOR COUNTRY OFFICES (CO)

29. The standard Selection Panel is composed of four members, as follows:

- the Hiring Manager, normally responsible for chairing the Panel;
- a representative of the staff designated by the Staff Association or a Staff Association dues paying staff member if there is no Staff Association chapter in the CO;
- an Independent Panel Member, preferably with technical knowledge of the subject area of the vacant position, from another cluster or department, or representative from another UN agency if there is a limited number of staff in the CO and identified by the HR Specialist or their representative;
- HR Specialist or their representative, such as the HR focal point or Administrative Officer.

30. Each of the above has full panel member status and is required to sign the Selection Report. The roles and responsibilities of the Selection Panel Members are detailed in Annex 2.

### SELECTION PANEL MEETINGS

31. In the event that the Staff Association, having been invited to participate in the Selection Panel, opts not to be represented in the Panel, this should be clearly documented in the Selection Report.

32. Selection Panel Members should be available to attend all meetings and interviews. Meetings may also be held through cost-efficient audio or video telephony (such as video-conference, skype). Only in very exceptional circumstances, such as an unforeseen long absence, should a Panel Member be replaced once the process is under way. While it is to be avoided insofar as is possible, in the event that the replacement of a Panel Member is necessary, it must be ensured that all candidates are interviewed by the same Panel Members.

## V. Screening

### PRELIMINARY SCREENING

33. The HR Specialist conducts a preliminary screening of the applicants who applied during the defined posting period, based on responses provided by applicants to vacancy-specific screening questions. Screening questions are formulated by the HR Specialist in consultation with the Hiring Manager, for each individual vacancy on the basis of the minimum requirements and desirables reflected in the classified position description.

### IN-DEPTH EVALUATION OF PRE-SCREENED CANDIDATES

34. The results of this preliminary screening are provided to the Hiring Manager with a list of all applicants, together with standardized tools to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the candidates who appear to match the recruitment profile (see Annex 3 – WHO Hiring Manager’s Guide to Screening Candidates). WHO candidates whose responses to the screening questions indicate that they do not meet the minimum requirements are also included in the list in order to ensure that they have not mistakenly disqualified themselves. In evaluating the candidates, the Hiring Manager is only permitted to use the criteria specifically stated in the vacancy notice. Initially, candidates are assessed against the minimum requirements only, with desirables only coming into play when candidates are of equal merit based on the minimum requirements. The Hiring Manager proposes a short list of normally a maximum of five candidates.

## VI. Selection process

### CONFIRMATION OF SHORT LIST OF CANDIDATES

35. The HR Specialist convenes a meeting of the Selection Panel through the most efficient medium available, in advance of which is distributed relevant background material relevant to the selection, including a list of applicants and the outcome of the screening process. The objective of the meeting is to establish a final short list and to agree on how to best assess the short-listed candidates’ suitability for the position. Decisions taken at this stage of the process are recorded by the HR Specialist and will be included in the final Selection Report.
36. If after reviewing the Hiring Manager’s evaluation of candidates, the Selection Panel is satisfied that a viable pool of candidates exists, the selection process will proceed on this basis. Only candidates who meet the minimum requirements may be included in the short list.
37. Once the Selection Panel is satisfied that the above-steps, the overriding spirit of transparency and equality, and the applicable Staff Regulations have been respected, the short list is agreed.

### CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT METHODS

38. Once a short list is established, the Selection Panel agrees on the position-related technical areas and competency-based questions to be assessed in the selection process, in line with the competencies and requirements set out in the vacancy

notice. A written test must be included in addition to the mandatory interview. The same technical skills and competencies will be explored for all candidates in a particular selection. The proposed weightings of the written test and interview are agreed by the Panel: normally 40% for the written test and 60% for interview.

- **ENTRY LEVEL TEST (OPTIONAL)**

39. An eliminatory entry level test may be administered to ensure candidates meet a vital minimum requirement, such as language ability. Generic entry level tests administered by other UN agencies are acceptable if they fit the purpose. Use of an entry level test is at the discretion of HR, and may be administered before the Selection Panel deliberates the initial short list; and through the most efficient and effective method.

- **WRITTEN TEST (MANDATORY)**

40. A written test is mandatory and may be used as an eliminatory or complementary assessment tool. Written tests are normally administered to examine technical and/or functional competence and/or to assess writing skills in the languages specified in the vacancy notice.

41. Written tests are administered in the most efficient and effective way as evaluated by HR (such as, through eRecruitment as an online test or invigilated on-site). HR is responsible for ensuring anonymity of test papers during the assessment phase.

42. The test must be relevant to the functions of the position as reflected in the vacancy notice and objectively designed. Written test questions are normally developed and evaluated by the Hiring Manager, and shared among the other Panel Members for their review. The Hiring Manager will also prepare expected answers to facilitate the Selection Panel's assessment of candidates. A minimum of two scorers is required. Authorship of the papers is only revealed to the Panel Members after the interviews have taken place.

43. Candidates will be informed that failure to reference material from any source, including the internet, intranet, WHO publications and academic material (including that to which they have contributed), will lead to the disqualification of their application and, in the case of WHO staff members, may lead to the imposition of disciplinary measures. In all cases, the papers are submitted through a programme to detect plagiarism.

- **INTERVIEW (MANDATORY)**

44. Interviews are arranged by HR. The interview will comprise competency-based questions, and may also assess aspects such as general attitude, and overall suitability for the position and international service. It may be limited to a maximum of five competency areas as reflected in the position description. Probing questions must be asked to elicit more information from the candidate.

45. Competency-based interviews will, insofar as is possible, include questions in all languages specified in the minimum requirements of the position description, in order to ascertain whether the candidates meet the language requirements set out in the vacancy notice. To this end, it is important that the Selection Panel has the capacity to assess these languages.

46. Competency-based questions will be appropriately designed to offer equal opportunity of success to all candidates shortlisted. For example, competency-based questions should be so written that a candidate on a temporary contract at the G.3 level has equal chance of being able to reply to questions as a candidate on a fixed-term contract at the same grade.
47. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face; however if candidates are at different locations, interviews can be conducted through cost-efficient video telephony (such as video-conference). Interviews may be conducted by telephone if no other option exists. Internal candidates must be interviewed through the same medium. While it is preferable to interview all candidates through the same medium, external candidates may be interviewed through the most efficient method available, insofar as internal candidates are not perceived to be disadvantaged. For example, if all internal candidates are interviewed by video, other candidates should not be interviewed face-to-face.
48. The Selection Panel will interview all shortlisted candidates, with the HR Specialist completing an individual Candidate Assessment Form (Annex 4) for each candidate, reflecting the Panel's collective assessment.

## VII. PMDS and reference checks

50. The PMDS reports of WHO candidates who are included in the short list are consulted by the HR Specialist, with assistance from the Regional Office where required, and any performance issues and comments by the staff member thereto are brought to the attention of the Selection Panel.
51. In the case of UN and external candidates, reference checks will be initiated, preferably before candidates are invited for interview. Although time constraints or other factors may require this step to be completed after the interview, references must be collected at the very latest before the appointment action is initiated by the hiring department.
52. At least two references must be taken from previous employers, using the standard WHO Reference Request Form (Annex 5). Guidelines on How to Take References (Annex 6) should be consulted.

## VIII. Recommendation and decision

### RECOMMENDATION

53. The Selection Panel discusses the overall results of the candidate assessment, and explores whether consensus can be reached regarding the individual candidates' suitability for the position. A candidate who does not satisfy the minimum requirements of the post, as set out in the vacancy notice, cannot be recommended for selection.
54. The Panel will first identify the recommendable candidates and then rank them in order of overall suitability and best fit. In its deliberations, the Selection Panel must also be mindful of the priority, preference and consideration to be shown to different categories of staff members (see Paragraphs 8 to 12). Where the

Selection Panel's suitability ranking is not in keeping with the overall scores achieved in the interview and other competitive stages, an explanation must be provided why strict numerical ranking is not in the best interests of the Organization. On this basis, the Selection Panel submits a final recommendation (Selection Report - Annex 7) to the appropriate decision maker, recommending, where possible, the three most suitable candidates based on their overall performance in the assessment. If consensus is not reached, the differing views are fully documented in the Selection Report for consideration by the decision-maker who will make the final selection. The Selection Report is signed by all Panel Members.

### **DECISION**

55. The Selection Panel makes its recommendation to the decision making authority.
56. Where recommended candidates are of equal merit, the priority, preferences and considerations set out in Paragraphs 8 to 12 will be observed.

### **AFTER DECISION**

57. After the relevant decision-maker has selected a candidate, the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist communicates the outcome to the Hiring Manager who is given the opportunity to personally inform the selected candidate. Once the selected candidate has been notified, the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist confirms to the candidate his/her selection in writing, stipulating that a formal offer of appointment will be subject to prerequisites, including a reference check and medical examination. Upon the selected candidate's acceptance of a formal offer of appointment, candidates are informed that the vacancy has been filled. In the event that the selected candidate declines the offer, the Selection Panel's recommendation will again be referred to the decision maker to decide on a second candidate, where one has been recommended, or if not, to re-advertise the position.
58. The original Selection Report and supporting documentation are confidential documents and are retained in HR, in accordance with the Recruitment Records Retention Schedule, for three years after the selection process has been completed.

## **IX. Accountability**

59. The Hiring Manger is responsible and will be held accountable for the integrity and outcome of the process, up to the final selection decision.

## **X. List of annexes**

1. Timeline for completion of selection process
2. Selection panel composition
3. WHO hiring manager's guide to screening candidates
4. Candidate assessment form
5. Reference request form
6. Guidelines on how to take references
7. Selection report

8. Roster management