
Guidance on Creating Inclusive Vacancy Announcements: Good Practice Examples from the UN



CREATING INCLUSIVE VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Guidelines and Good Practice Examples from the UN System

This guidance note provides key tips and good examples collected from the UN system on designing inclusive vacancy announcements that will attract more diverse applicants to job openings, reflecting the UN's principles of diversity and equality. Attracting more applicants can enhance the quality of candidate pools. Research has also shown a strong positive correlation between staff diversity and innovation¹.

Top Tips for Inclusive Vacancy Announcements:

1. Use Inclusive Language

- Use simple and jargon-free language that is gender-neutral and inclusive. Provide unconscious bias training to all hiring and HR managers and use a Gender Decoder tool to double check for any masculine-coded language.

2. Include Value Statements

- Start off with organizational value statements on topics such as diversity and inclusion, zero tolerance for discrimination or harassment and work-life balance.

3. Emphasize Potential Over Experience

- Focus on “must-have” evaluation criteria and minimize any desirable or “nice-to-have” criteria.

4. Incorporate a Gender Indicator in Evaluation Criteria

- Include a commitment to gender equality as a competence and evaluate candidates on their ability to incorporate a gender perspective in their work.

¹ Source: [Ernst & Young](#)

TIP #1

Use Inclusive Language

- ✓ Ensure that vacancy announcements **use gender neutral language** throughout and avoid ableism.
- ✓ Require hiring managers to be trained on **eliminating unconscious bias in recruitment processes**, including job design, job descriptions and vacancy announcements.
- ✓ **Avoid using words which are traditionally associated with men**, as research has shown that women will be less likely to apply². Obvious masculine words to avoid are e.g. he/his, mankind – instead use she/her or they/their and humankind.
- ✓ Be aware of words that, according to [research](#), are coded as gendered:
 - ✓ Masculine coded words: leadership, persistence, challenges, autonomy, challenging
 - ✓ Feminine coded words: trust, support, understanding, sharing, responsibility
- ✓ **Avoid using unnecessary jargon and “insider language”** in job descriptions and when specifying candidate requirements. For example, instead of using acronyms and unfamiliar terms, **use more universal language** such as “exhibits attention to detail” or “experienced in building and maintaining relationships with clients”.

Examples from the UN:

- **ODA:** All vacancy announcements are screened by the ODA gender team to ensure use of gender-neutral language
- **ILO, UNOPS, DGACM:** Attention is paid to use of neutral nouns/pronouns in job descriptions (e.g. “the position will be under the supervision of...”) or to consistently use “she/he” rather than using “he” by default. In French and Spanish, job titles are in both masculine and feminine forms
- **UNOPS:** The organization is evaluating solutions based on artificial intelligence to ensure that vacancy announcements have a gender-neutral tone
- The **Gender Decoder tool** reviews job descriptions to identify gendered words that may make candidates feel excluded and thereby limit the applicant pool. The free tool can be used to review any document and eliminate bias-triggering language, and it is particularly useful for vacancy announcements in UN official languages that use grammatical genders
- **GenderTerm**, developed by UN Women, is a searchable, multilingual gender-inclusive lexicon that can be used to ensure that terms are gender-inclusive
- The UN provides **Guidelines on Gender-inclusive Language** with best practices and strategies for more gender-inclusive communication, supplemented by a **Toolbox for using Gender-inclusive Language** to better understand how to apply the Guidelines.

² Source: [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#)

TIP #2

Include Value Statements

- ✓ Include statements that demonstrate the **organization's values (diversity, flexible working or other enabling practices, zero-tolerance approach to harassment)**
- ✓ Include value statements **at the beginning of the vacancy announcement**, rather than the end, and use formatting (bold or underline) to add suitable emphasis.
- ✓ **Streamline the vacancy announcement system** so that statements automatically appear on all announcements regardless of contract modality, location or seniority.
- ✓ Consider having **a dedicated webpage** that demonstrates the organization's values of diversity and inclusion. Include a link to the webpage in the job advertisement and ensure the webpage **highlights the experiences of underrepresented groups in the organization.**
- ✓ Ensure **diversity of personnel is visible in all communications materials**, including when posting on social media.
- ✓ Ensure that **respect to diversity is reflected in the recruitment process**, e.g. signpost the support and options available for candidates with accessibility needs.
- ✓ **Consider including benefits offered**, such as flexible working practices, health insurance and leave policies, pension schemes, childcare subsidies, etc.
- ✓ Explain how the **security and safety of personnel are addressed in the duty station**, especially for openings in field and mission settings.

Examples from the UN of value statements:

- **ODA:** All vacancy announcements include the standard clause that encourages female candidates to apply, which is pre-populated in the system
- **ILO:** Vacancy announcements for vendors include a standard header clause about the vendor's responsibility regarding diversity and inclusion and specific examples of what these mean. These examples are tailored depending on the service being provided. Clauses are included in the TOR template to ensure that they will be included in the sample TORs that are shared with staff worldwide to support colleagues outside of HR who may also be hiring similar services.

Examples from the UN of statements on zero tolerance for misconduct:

- **UNU and UNICEF:** "UNU (UNICEF) has a zero-tolerance policy on conduct that is incompatible with the aims and objectives of the United Nations and UNU (UNICEF), including sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination. All selected candidates will be expected to adhere to these standards and principles."

TIP #2 (continued)

Include Value Statements

Examples from the UN of statements on diversity and inclusion:

- **UNOPS:** “With over 4,000 UNOPS personnel and approximately 7,000 personnel recruited on behalf of UNOPS partners spread across 80 countries, our workforce represents a wide range of nationalities and cultures. We promote a balanced, diverse workforce — a strength that helps us better understand and address our partners’ needs, and continually strive to improve our gender balance through initiatives and policies that encourage recruitment of qualified female candidates.”
- **UNOV/UNODC:** “The United Nations Secretariat is committed to achieving 50/50 gender balance in its staff. Female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply for this position. Due regard will be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. The United Nations places no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.”
- **UNFCCC:** “Qualified women candidates and candidates from developing countries are especially encouraged to apply.” (Included for P-positions)
- **ESCAP:** “ESCAP is committed to promoting diversity and gender equality within the Secretariat. Women candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.” (Included for JOs, at Professional level and above)
- **UNON:** “The United Nations Secretariat is committed to achieving 50/50 gender balance in its staff. Female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply for this position.”
- **UN Women:** “At UN Women, we are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment of mutual respect. UN Women recruits, employs, trains, compensates and promotes regardless of race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental disability, national origin, veteran status or any other basis covered by appropriate law. All employment is decided on the basis of qualifications, competence, integrity and organizational need. If you need any reasonable accommodation to support your participation in the recruitment and selection process, please include this information in your application.”
- **ILO:** “The ILO values diversity among its staff. We welcome applications from qualified women and men, including those with disabilities. If you are unable to complete our online application form due to a disability, please send an email to ilojobs@ilo.org.”
- **UN Globe** informs that the preferred language to use in vacancy notices is “Persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.”

TIP #2 (continued)

Include Value Statements

Examples from the UN of statements on work-life balance:

- **UNOPS:** “Work life harmonization - UNOPS values its people and recognizes the importance of balancing professional and personal demands. We have a progressive policy on work-life harmonization and offer several flexible working options. This policy applies to UNOPS personnel on all contract types.”

Examples from the UN of statements on diversity and inclusion for vendors:

- **ILO:** Vendors are required to pay attention to diversity and inclusion. The standard header for vendors’ vacancy announcements is: “The contractor will ensure that attention is given to gender equality and non-discrimination on the basis of age, race, gender, religion, colour, national extraction, social origin, marital status, pregnancy, family responsibilities, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, union membership or political conviction in the manner in which services are delivered.” Explicit examples are provided.

Examples from the UN of linking to dedicated, more user-friendly recruitment webpages for potential applicants:

- **UNDP:** All vacancy announcements refer to a specific webpage on diversity inclusion: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/jobs/gender-and-diversity.html>
- **IOM:** A dedicated webpage on diversity and inclusion, which is referenced in all vacancy notices, highlights the organization’s commitment to diversity and existing policies and accommodations for the needs of staff, particularly for parents and families, women, LGBTIQ+ staff, staff with disabilities and diversity of nationality and ethnicity. Information includes a link to commitments the IOM has made at programme level for the Global Disability Summit 2018, an online form for a webinar on diversity at IOM, and links to the UN-SWAP and the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity. <https://www.iom.int/diversity>
- **UNOPS:** Each UNOPS vacancy announcement shared from the external recruitment career portal on social media automatically has a picture composed of people from minority groups and features mostly women. It has been developed based on recruitment outreach and inclusive communication best-practices. The tagline “We’re recruiting” is translated in French and Spanish, also for inclusion purposes.
- **ILO:** ILO Jobs website <https://jobs.ilo.org/>

TIP #3

Emphasize Potential Over Experience

- ✓ Ensure that **only essential qualifications and “must-haves”** are mentioned in the **evaluation criteria** in vacancy announcements to attract the widest pool of applicants. The **“nice-to-haves”** and **non-essential criteria** could discourage **underrepresented groups** from applying. According to research, women tend to apply only if they feel they meet all or nearly all listed criteria³.
- ✓ If you must list certain desired skills, include a qualifying statement such as “Candidates are not required to possess all skills listed; you are encouraged to apply if you have any combination of these skills”. **Clearly indicate which requirements are essential and which are preferred.**
- ✓ It is especially important to **avoid including restrictive criteria such as:**
 - ✓ qualifications or licenses specific to some countries or groups of countries;
 - ✓ prior field experience;
 - ✓ knowledge or skills which can only be acquired in the UN.
- ✓ Consider including a statement on **the value of diverse experiences** and a **list of transferrable skills** to encourage traditionally underrepresented candidates.
- ✓ **Consult HR practitioners** when calculating years of experience if needed

Examples from the UN on focusing on “must-haves” and limiting “desirables”:

- **UNOV/UNODC:** Attention is paid in vacancy announcements to avoid experiences that may favour one gender (e.g. field experience) and are not included as “mandatory” but only “desirable”.
- **UNOPS** piloted a project to hire people with a focus on potential to perform a given job, rather than exclusively based on past experience. Consequently, these vacancy announcements mention a reduced the number of years of experience required. These candidates would then go through an additional assessment to demonstrate transferable skills and potential to perform the job.
- **UNOPS** is piloting a project where vacancy announcements at lower contract levels must mention the possible different combinations of requirements between education and work experience. For example: “Bachelors with 0 years of experience or Secondary school degree with 4 years of experience”. This additional transparency attracts candidates who would otherwise not apply and supports the selection of candidates from diverse backgrounds.
- **UNIDO** in Brazil considers unpaid work experience of the candidates as part of their experience. It also removed the “previous UN experience is an asset” from vacancy announcements.

³ Source: [LinkedIn](#)

TIP #4

Incorporate a Gender indicator in Evaluation Criteria

- ✓ Ensure that job openings **demonstrate the organization's commitment to gender equality and diversity** by including a gender indicator in the competencies required under the evaluation criteria.
- ✓ When evaluating candidates, **measure commitment to gender equality as a competence** and require them to demonstrate that they can incorporate a gender perspective into their work.

Examples from the UN on gender indicators as part of evaluation criteria:

- **UN Secretariat:** In the UN Secretariat, all job openings include a gender indicator in the competencies required in the position. For leadership positions (P-5, D-1 and D-2 level) the indicator is included under the competency of 'leadership', for all others it is under the competency of 'professionalism'.
 - **P-5, D-1 and D-2:** "Provides leadership and takes responsibility for incorporating gender perspectives and ensuring the equal participation of women and men in all areas of work; demonstrates knowledge of strategies and commitment to the goal of gender balance in staffing."
 - **P-1 to P-4, FS-6 and FS-7 and National Professional Officers:** "Takes responsibility for incorporating gender perspectives and ensuring the equal participation of women and men in all areas of work."
 - **FS-1 to FS-5, and General Service and related categories excluding National Professional Officers:** "Demonstrates commitment to implementing the goal of gender equality by ensuring the equal participation and full involvement of women and men in all aspects of work."
- **ILO:** All job descriptions contain the following behavioral competency: "Ability to work in a multicultural environment and to demonstrate gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory behavior and attitudes."