NSW RFS OPERATIONAL OFFICER (OpO) HANDBOOK

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Document control

Release history

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Related documents

Document name	Version
District and Operational Officer (D/OpO) Training Information Booklet	v1.1
NSW RFS Policy P3.2.9 NSW RFS Operational Officer (OpO) Program	v1.0

Contents

Chapter 1.   Introduction – Working for the NSW RFS

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) plays a key coordinating and strategic role in the overall planning and management of fire prevention, protection and suppression in NSW. The NSW RFS is the lead combat agency for bush fires in NSW and also provides resources and support to other emergency service organisations.

The Commisioner of the NSW RFS has ultimate responsibility for bush fire suppression across the State.

The NSW RFS is reportedly the world's largest volunteer-based fire service. Volunteers fulfill the incident response role of the NSW RFS with over 2,000 rural fire brigades and more than 73,000 volunteer members protecting rural areas, villages, small towns and some outer urban fringes across New South Wales.

The NSW RFS employs around 820 staff to manage its day to day operations and administration, to develop and implement programs, strategies and initiatives to assist the organisation to achieve its strategic objectives, but more importantly to support the dedicated volunteers who make the NSW RFS the world recognised leader in rural fire services.

Chapter 2.   Merit – The Basis of recruitment

The NSW RFS as an agency within the NSW Public Service, recruits employees based on merit. This means that from a field of applicants for Operational Officer roles, the assessment panel select the person best suited to the requirements of the role and the needs of the NSW RFS.

To do this the assessment panel compare all candidates' skills, experience and abilities against the capabilities, knowledge and experience standards set for the Operational Officer role. The assessment panel uses different assessment methods, such as written applications, capability-based assessments, interviews and referee checks, to collect the evidence required to make a merit-based decision.

The NSW Public Service Capability Framework provides a common foundation for creating and recruiting to roles www.psc.nsw.gov.au/Sector-Support/Capability-Framework, which can be supplemented by occupation or profession-specific capability sets. The Role Description for the Operational Officer is attached to the NSW Jobs Advertisement.

Chapter 3.   Using the Handbook / Purpose

This handbook explains the application and selection processes for those seeking employment in the NSW Rural Fire Service as an Operational Officer (OpO).

While the process can vary depending on the Operational Officer Level (i.e. Level 1, 2 or 3), the following shows the typical steps:

1. Find an Operational Officer role on www.jobs.nsw.gov.au

2. Create or update your profile and include your personal details on jobs.nsw.gov.au

3. Respond to any disqualification questions and create your cover letter

4. Respond to the targeted questions and update your resume / curriculum vitae (CV)

5. Submit your application

6. Successful applicants will undertake the selection and assessment process

7. Successful applicants will undertake a two-week residential induction programme

8. Offer made to successful candidate(s)

9. Feedback provided to unsuccessful candidate(s)

Note: This application process can be followed for an individual role such as an Operational Officer; or for the creation of a talent pool for common role types. Talent pools can be accessed by agencies when they need to fill a vacancy for common role type.

The NSW RFS OpO Program

The NSW RFS OpO Program is an initiative the NSW RFS is undertaking to create a mobile and agile workforce across the state.

The OpO program is a unique opportunity for NSW RFS employees to gain experience in a wide range of activities in district and regional roles as well as other specialised sections across the organisation. OpO employees will train to become Certificate Issuing Officers (CIO), Prescribed Burning Supervisors (PBS) and Media Liaison Officers (MLO) as well as many other roles including undertaking Intelligence, Planning and Logistics roles during major incidents. Further development throughout the OpO roles will also involve training and assessment in control functions. Throughout their employment, OpO employees will have the opportunity to work with experienced volunteers from a variety of geographical areas and become familiar with other emergency service agencies.

OpO is a unique program. OpO employees are part of the OpO Development and Training Program and are eligible for access to voluntary OpO mobility. Rather than being appointed to a specific role in a specific location, Operational Officers are appointed to classifications of work and may initially be assigned any role within that classification at any location within the state of NSW. As an OpO moves up to a district or operational management level, they are desired to have experienced a wide range of activities undertaken in different locations.

To progress to their full potential, OpO employees may voluntarily elect to rotate through identified category areas for no less than two years in each, and through a wide range of activities within their assigned roles. The NSW RFS has categorised areas across NSW to assist in defining the different work locations which is outlined in section 4.3.1 of this handbook.

How does the OpO program work?

Once the recruitment process has been completed, OpO candidates who successfully complete the two-week residential induction program will be placed in an OpO talent pool, and be eligible for offers of employment.

Throughout their initial assignment typically during their first six month probationary period, OpO employees will undertake a structured training program outlined in the *District and Operational Officer (D/OpO) Training Information Booklet.* It is expected that this training will be undertaken and assessments finalised before completion of any probation. When the training program has been completed and no less than two years after the start of the initial assignment, OpO employees may voluntarily elect to be rotated to a new location for their first subsequent assignment. See 3.2 *OpO Voluntary Elected Mobility* below.

Experience across different locations and work activities will become major considerations for selection to higher classifications of work. This puts candidates in a good position to progress to higher levels if they wish, through a competitive selection process.

Rotation through the category areas provides OpO employees with this experience and can take place at OpO1, OpO2, OpO3 levels, or across all three levels. When an OpO employee seeks promotion, recruitment application will be made to the next OpO level. Offers of placement in any promotion will be, on principle, not in the same category area to which the OpO employee works prior to promotion.

The method which the NSW RFS uses to implement this program is detailed in the NSW RFS Policy P3.2.9 NSW RFS Operational Officer (OpO) Program.

3.1   Initial Assignment

The initial assignment to an OpO role shall be offered to a candidate in consideration of their overall performance during the selection, recruitment and induction program process. The NSW RFS shall, as vacancies arise, make offers of employment to successful OpO candidates who have been placed within respective OpO level talent pools.

Operational Officer roles have been designed so that the OpO employee can perform their duties anywhere in the state of NSW. It is anticipated that placement in any location will normally be for an assigned tenure of no less than two years.

3.2   OpO Voluntary Elected Mobility

The NSW RFS will provide to OpO roles a program of voluntary elected mobility to enhance and accelerate experience across OpO category areas. Upon completion of an OpO candidate's assignment tenure, the NSW RFS will review what OpO category areas an OpO has yet to undertake. Subject to availability of suitable roles an OpO may be offered mobility to another category area.

Where an offer of mobility is made to an OpO they may:

› Accept the offer of rotation;

› Decline the offer of rotation; or

› Decline the offer of rotation on this occasion, and advise that they would like to be made another offer in the next OpO placement reviews.

3.2.1 NSW RFS OpO Mobility Category Areas:

The NSW RFS has developed Mobility Category Areas across NSW. These areas are intended to demonstrate the typical operational demographics that the NSW RFS seeks to expose any NSW RFS Operational Officer to.

Category Area	Operational Demographic
1	Western
2	Riverina
3	Central Plains
4	Central Ranges
5	Southern Ranges & Alpine
6	South Coast
7	Greater Sydney
8	Central Coast
9	North Coast
10	Northern Rangers
11	Northern Plains

The following map depicts the Category areas:

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Regions/Districts/Teams/Zones

OpO Category Area
- Non-RFS
- Central Coast
- Central Plains
- Central Ranges
- Greater Sydney
- North Coast
- Northern Plains
- Northern Ranges
- Riverina
- South Coast
- Southern Alpine & Ranges
- Western

1. Western
2. Riverina
3. Central Plains
4. Central Ranges
5. Northern Plains
6. Northern Ranges
7. North Coast
8. Central Coast
9. Greater Sydney
10. Southern Alpine & Ranges
11. South Coast

7. NORTH COAST: Tweed, Byron, Ballina, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey

8. CENTRAL COAST: Hastings, Greater Taree, Gloucester, Great Lakes, Dungog, Port Stephens, Maitland, Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Wyong

9. GREATER SYDNEY: Gosford, Warringah Pittwater, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai, The Hills, Hawkesbury, Blacktown, Fairfield, Penrith, Blue Mountains, Liverpool, Camden, Campbelltown, Sutherland, Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, Wollondilly, Wingecarribee

3. CENTRAL PLAINS: Walgett, Coonamble, Warren, Bogan, Parkes, Forbes, Weddin, Lachlan, Narromine, Dubbo, Wellington, Bland, Temora

4. CENTRAL RANGES: Cabonne, Orange, Blayney, Cowra, Cudgegong, Mussellbrook, Singleton, Bathurst, Oberon, Lithgow, Boorowa, Harden, Young, Cootamundra

5. NORTHERN PLAINS: Gwydir, Narrabri, Moree Plains, Warrumbungle, Gilgandra, Gunnedah, Liverpool Plains, Upper Hunter

6. NORTHERN RANGES: Tenterfield, Glen Innes Severn, Inverell, Guyra, Armidale Dumaresq, Walcha, Uralla, Tamworth

10. SOUTHERN ALPINE AND RANGES: Goulburn Mulwaree, Upper Lachlan, Yass Valley, Palerang, Queanbeyan City, Cooma-Monaro, Bombala, Snowy River, Gundagai, Tumut, Tumbarumba

11. SOUTH COAST: Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla, Bega Valley

1. WESTERN: Brewarrina, Bourke, Cobar, Central Darling, Unincorporated NSW, Balranald, Wentworth

2. RIVERINA: Narrandera, Leeton, Griffith, Murrumbidgee, Carrathool, Hay, Junee, Wagga Wagga, Coolamon, Lockhart, Urana, Greater Hume, Albury, Corowa, Berrigan, Jerilderie, Conargo, Deniliquin, Murray, Wakool

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NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE
www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

3.3   OpO Promotion and Rotation Review Panel (OpO PRRP)

The NSW RFS has established an OpO Promotion and Rotation Review Panel that comprises of key internal stakeholders and independent persons, to oversee initial and subsequent assignments of OpO personnel to different category areas across NSW. The key personnel on the Mobility Review Panel are:

❯ Director, Regional Services (Chair)

❯ 1 x Regional Manager

❯ Manager State Mitigation

❯ Manager Membership Coordination Unit (MMCU)

❯ Two other members as nominated by the Executive Director Membership and Strategic Services.

Other parties may participate in the review panel from time to time to assist the panel in the provision of information or other matters relevant to the conducting of business of the OpO PRRP.

The Panel is responsible for providing management of the voluntary mobility process and ensuring equity and procedural fairness is applied to all OpO employee elected movements.

The OpO PRRP will meet as often as required to facilitate the effective and efficient operation of the OpO Program.

The Panel is directly responsible and accountable to the Executive Director Operations. In carrying out its responsibilities, the Panel will at all times recognise that primary responsibility for the management of each NSW RFS employee rests with the Commissioner in accordance with the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*.

3.3.1   Voluntary Elected Mobility Process

The following is how a typical voluntary elected mobility process (subsequent assignment) will operate as part of the OpO Program.

Step 1	Notification is sent to eligible OpO employee advising of impending tenure expiry. This notification would typically take place at least six months from tenure expiration.
Step 2	The OpO Promotion and Rotation Review Panel (OpO PRRP) will conduct an assessment of each eligible OpO and make recommendation for mobility to a nominated category area.
Step 3	Notification is sent to the eligible OpO employee providing the category area and location recommended for voluntary mobility by the OpO PRRP.
Step 4	The OpO employee shall be requested to either:

1. Accept the location offered
2. Decline the location offered and decline future offers to be made
3. Decline and nominate desire for future offers to be made

Step 5	Where the OpO employee voluntarily elects to accept the category area and location offered, a formal letter of offer will be sent.
Step 6	Processing of any applications for financial assistance under the NSW RFS Operational Officer (OpO) Program P3.2.9 clause 3.30.
Step 7	Any roles remaining vacant following this process will be filled from the OpO talent pool or subsequent OpO recruitment.

3.3.2 Assistance to relocate following elected mobility (subsequent assignment)

The NSW RFS recognises that an inherent cost of the mobility component of the OpO program is in the relocation of OpO employees from one assignment to the next. OpO employees through the application and acceptance of an offer of employment recognise that they will be a mobile workforce and subsequently normal industrial arrangements surrounding relocation may be affected as per the Policy P3.2.9.

The NSW RFS seeks to provide assistance to OpO employees who are rotated in the following capacity:

❯ Upon application and approval in accordance with NSW RFS Policy P3.2.9 reimburse the OpO employee costs up to $5,000 per assignment.

> *The NSW RFS has a requirement to satisfy all public finance and audit requirements in respect to payments made. Subsequently all copies of document substantiation of cost incurred will need to be provided at time of application. (E.g. Removalist Quote/Invoice)*

Chapter 4. Operational Officer Training and Development

The District and Operational Officer (D/OpO) Training Information Booklet produced by the Operational Doctrine and Standards Unit, outlines the training requirements and content of all operations courses.

This Booklet provides information about training for District / Operational Officers and those in similar roles in the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS).

It applies to officers working in districts, regions and headquarters who have an operational or similar function. It does not apply to staff with a purely technical or corporate function, outside of the Operations Directorate.

4.1 What this training aims to do

The system aims to provide district / operational staff with the knowledge and skills they need to do their job well, so they can deliver what our community and our volunteers need. It is the means by which the Service ensures it has staff skilled to provide the functions specified in Section 9 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*.

4.2 Categories of training

District / operational staff training can be divided into three main categories:

❯ **Induction Courses** – Aimed at inducting Operational Officers into the NSW RFS or up into the next OpO level. Induction courses are provided for OpO1, OpO2 and OpO3 levels.

❯ **Initial Training Courses** – Aimed at training both Operational Officers coming into the NSW RFS or moving up to a higher level, and District (and other similar officers) already at those levels who have not completed the relevant courses in the past.

❯ **Incident Management Training / Exercising** –Aimed at training and exercising people (including volunteers, staff and other agency personnel) in Incident Management Team (IMT) functions and associated subjects.

4.3 Related activities

In addition to the above, the Operational Doctrine section will also provide:

❯ **Development Activities** – These include activities to be undertaken when a person is assigned to a new location so they become familiar with its characteristics as soon as possible. It also includes information about what external qualifications (certificates, diplomas, etc.) are appropriate to pursue through professional development.

❯ **Information for District Managers** – In particular what operational training they should plan for their people to undertake and what they should expect of their people once they have completed various stages of training.

❯ **Professional Development Advice** – This includes information about what external qualifications (certificates, diplomas, etc.) are appropriate to pursue through professional development at various levels.

The D/OpO Training Information Book is available by contacting the Operational Doctrine section or Regional Services.

Chapter 5.   Applying for a NSW RFS Operational Officer Role
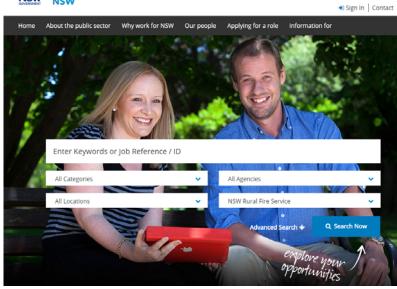
5.1 Finding NSW RFS Operational Officer Roles

www.iworkfor.nsw.gov.au (jobs.nsw) is the primary career board for the NSW Rural Fire Service. It lists current vacancies and is the portal for online application and tracking. While some jobs may be listed on other job search websites and / or in newspapers you need to apply for all roles on this website.

Searching for roles

Vacant roles are displayed on jobs.nsw in descending order according to the date they were advertised. However, candidates can also choose to search by job title, location or work type (for example, full time or part time).

The "quick search" function allows you to search for a specific role using the role reference number, a keyword or through specific locations. The "advanced search" (figure 1) feature can be used to refine the types of roles displayed.

Earmarking advertisements to the "job cart" will group roles you are interested in and separate them from the full list. It is an easy way of identifying advertised roles that interest you so you can quickly navigate to them on your return to the site.

You can also activate the "new job alert" function on your profile. This function triggers an email to your registered email address when a newly advertised role that matches your recorded preferences.

Figure 1

5.2 Understanding NSW RFS Operational Officer Roles

Depending on the nature of the work to be done and whether it is ongoing or for a defined term or project, employment as a public service employee may be:

❯ Ongoing;

❯ Temporary; or

❯ Casual.

Operational Officer Roles within the NSW RFS are generally on an *Ongoing* basis however temporary assignments may be available at times.

Successful candidates are assigned to an Operational Officer role within the NSW RFS at a District, Region, or Headquarters location and may elect to relocate to other Operational Officer roles in the NSW RFS over time for organisational and development purposes. This approach promotes elected mobility across the NSW RFS, broadens employees' capabilities and provides new development opportunities. It also allows the NSW RFS to respond quickly to changing government priorities or community need, as well as provide valuable exposure to volunteer culture across the broader NSW RFS.

Policy *P3.2.9 NSW RFS Operational Officer (OpO) Program* details how voluntary elected mobility is to be operated within the NSW RFS*. It is essential candidates read this policy and consider their own personal and family circumstances prior to applying for an Operational Officer Role.*

Chapter 6.   The application process

6.1 Application

To apply, candidates must submit:

- A one page covering letter;
- Written responses (500 words each), to one or two targeted questions (to provide evidence of experience against required role capabilities);
- Written responses (250 words each) to RFS Specific Occupational / Technical Capabilities; and
- A resume / curriculum vitae (CV).

Understanding the role, what is required and whether you have the right skills and experience are important in deciding whether to apply.

Your application will have a greater chance of success if you follow the following principles:

- **Read the advertisement carefully** - All OpO advertisements include a brief description of the role, information on how to apply and a closing date for applications. Keep a copy of the reference number for future enquiries.
- **Read the information package** - The advertisement gives you basic information, but it is important to read the information package from the link provided in the advertisement. Documents in the package may include a role description, organisational chart or other material to help you understand the role and the organisation.
- **Speak to the contact person** - After you read the information package, you will know more about the role and may have some questions. You can phone or email the contact person named in the advertisement to help find the answers. Talking to the contact person may also give you a better understanding of the role, whether it is right for you and what to emphasise in your application.
- **Other information** - Get as much extra information as you can to help you present a covering letter and resume with relevant information. You could look at the NSW RFS website, annual report or other publications.
- **Online application process** – The online application process is presented as a series of 'pages' that require information to be completed prior to submitting your application. Each page has a number of fields. All compulsory fields are identified with a red asterisk (*) and must be completed prior to the page being saved.
- **Submit your application prior to the closing date** – Applications that are rushed may contain mistakes and may affect the outcome of your application. Give yourself enough time to complete and review your application in advance of the closing date.
- **Privacy Statement** - The privacy statement in jobs.nsw describes how privacy principles are applied, how and why data is collected and how it is stored. It also outlines circumstances when your information can be disclosed.

> TIP: Remember to check spelling, punctuation and grammar, and be succinct. The application itself indicates how well you can communicate and, if written well, can make a positive impression. Your application starts the OpO assessment process.

6.2 Profile (Personal details)

You can create your general profile on jobs.nsw at any time. This includes personal and contact information, creating a username and recording a password. Your email address is your unique identifier in jobs.nsw, so you can only create one account per email address.

This general profile can also be created as part of your first NSW Public Service job application. Once this basic information is captured it will populate any future applications automatically, removing the need to retype the same information.

If your contact details change or you would like to include some additional information, you can amend your profile at any time and submit different information for each application if required.

Data is also gathered on subjects such as diversity to assist with workforce planning. Other information, including how you learned of the job vacancy, is also gathered to provide insight into the most effective ways of advertising. Some of this information is provided on a voluntary basis and some is mandatory.

6.3   Essential Requirements

One of the first steps in the online application process is to be screened for essential role requirements. This is called "disqualification questions" in jobs.nsw and typically consists of a series of questions designed to provide information about your eligibility to apply, for example having a driver's licence. It will not be possible to progress with the application in the system if you do not meet one or more of the essential requirements.

6.4   Cover Letter and Targeted Questions

Your cover letter should be short and specific; highlighting the main points of your claim for the OpO role.

Your cover letter should be no more than one page in length and include:

> Details of the role you are applying for.
> A brief introduction about yourself.
> A summary of your relevant skills, qualifications and experience.
> Short statements, based on your actual experience, in response to the targeted questions*.

These targeted questions will usually start with phrases such as:

"Give an example of a situation where...."; or
"Describe a scenario...."

Your responses could follow the STAR format (by detailing the Situation, Task, Action and Result).

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* Targeted Questions

The advertisement will ask you to include a short statement (500 words each) in response to no more than two targeted questions. These are capability-based questions directly relevant to the role's duties and are designed to provide evidence of experience in a similar area. This is done by asking you to describe specific situations and to give actual examples of when you have used these specific skills.

The jobs.nsw "cover letter" field can only accept simple formatting, so if you are creating your cover letter in a Microsoft Word document, stick to the basics.

NOTE: Depending on the role you are applying for, you may be asked to answer the targeted questions directly into the jobs.nsw "pre-screening questions" field. If you do this, you do not need to add these targeted questions to your cover letter.

TIP: When completing targeted questions in the "pre-screening questions" field in jobs.nsw, you should draft your responses to targeted questions externally (for example - word document) before "cut and paste" entering the responses into the defined field. This allows you time to review and amend your responses prior to entering them into the system.

6.5   Resume/ Curriculum vitae (CV)

Your resume (also known as curriculum vitae or CV) is a snapshot summarising your qualifications, experience, skills and qualities. A resume needs to be clear, concise and neatly organised with content relevant to the role you are applying for.

Your resume should include your:

❯ Education, qualifications and details of any courses or areas of focus that might be relevant to the OpO role (e.g. NSW RFS courses and qualifications)

❯ Experience, paid and volunteer in reverse chronological order. For each job, include the role title, name and location of employer, and dates of employment. Briefly describe your role responsibilities for each job.

❯ Special skills, computer skills, achievements, and membership in organisations.

❯ References

In jobs.nsw, the "work experience" and "education" fields capture traditional resume information electronically.

6.6   Referees

Capabilities for an OpO role are assessed at different stages of the assessment process and panels will treat referee information as an important aspect of fact finding about your application.

When the assessment panel is making its final decision, information obtained from your referees will be considered together with your application, resume, capability assessment results, interview and other selection tools used.

The assessment panel may conduct a 360-degree check, which means talking to people you have supervised, you have worked with and who you reported to.

The panel may also ask you for additional referees if they need more information than is available from those you have nominated.

Like the "work experience" and "education" fields in jobs.nsw, referee information can be captured online. Names, contact details and information about your working relationship(s) can all be entered. You can add and remove referee contacts for each application and rearrange the referee order at any time.

6.7   Attachments

You may be asked to attach some form of documentation with your application, for example, a consent form to do background checks, and this can be added in the "attachment field".

If you delete a document you will be removing the ability for the assessment panel to view that document and therefore it will not be considered as part of your assessment.

Do not delete any document until you have information on the outcome of the recruitment action. If you have any concerns, please contact support@jobs.nsw.gov.au for advice before you delete any documents.

> NOTE: It is important to note that your attachment library in jobs.nsw contains the attachments for all your applications; however, only those marked as 'relevant' will be submitted for viewing with your application.

6.8   Submitting your application

Once all information has been entered into the system, you will be given an opportunity to review your application prior to submitting it. Take this opportunity to ensure all details are correct.

When you have successfully submitted your application, you will receive an email from jobs.nsw acknowledging your submission.

Chapter 7. The NSW RFS Operational Officer selection process

Once the closing date has passed, the assessment panel sits to determine the most suitable candidate(s) for the role(s).

The assessment process will be conducted in two parts:

> As a standard panel assessment process, and

> An assessment centre process for capability testing.

The assessment process selected by the panel is essential to ensure that the best person/s suited for the OpO role is recruited.

7.1 Standard panel assessment process

This process includes:

> Review of your application;

> Capability-based assessments*, one of which is an interview; and

> Rigorous 'fit-for-purpose' reference and background checking (which may include 360-degree reference checks to verify your employment and performance claims.)

This approach allows the full spectrum of capabilities for the OpO role to be assessed using different tools or methods, and at different stages of the OpO assessment process.

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* Capability-based assessments

The assessment panel will use a range of assessments to determine the person who has the capabilities, experience and knowledge best suited to the requirements of the role and the needs of the NSW RFS. Capability-based assessments are a good predictor of your future performance.

The capabilities for the role you are applying for are described in the Operational Officer role description (part of the information package). The NSW Public Service Capability Framework provides a common foundation for creating and recruiting to roles www.psc.nsw.gov.au/Sector-Support/Capability- Framework, which can be supplemented by occupation or profession- specific capability sets, where appropriate

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Operational Officer (OpO) Assessments:

The following are a brief example of assessments that are used by the NSW RFS when undertaking OpO Capability Assessments. Not all assessments are used each time, as this varies dependant on the level of Operational Officer applied for.

Cognitive ability assessments

Consisting of 20 multiple choice questions completed within 20 minute timeframe. The questions cover areas of technical knowledge applicants would be expected to have on day one of the role, in consideration to the technical capabilities contained within the role description. These may include knowledge about fire behaviour, incident management, hazard management, community engagement, etc. The questions are not specific to the NSW RFS systems or procedures, as to ensure any applicant from a related field will be competitive.

Literacy and numeracy assessment

Consisting of organising data, and composing a short hand written report, these assessments are designed to assess if candidates have sufficient basic numeracy and literacy skills to perform the role, with the ability to participate in induction and initial training regimes.

Computer skills assessment

Consisting of using a NSW RFS computer and suite of standard Microsoft Office programs, candidates will be asked to construct a letter, develop an excel spreadsheet, or similar activity. Detailed instructions are provided to assist the candidate however, knowledge of the use of the computer program is essential.

Work samples

Work sample assessments involve the candidate being requested to bring a portfolio of documents that are evidence of the candidate's work within the NSW RFS or similar agency. Each candidate will have up to 20 minutes to explain or discuss the work samples with an assessor. Candidates will be required to sign a declaration of originality, certifying works as their own as well as briefly explaining what the documents are and how they relate to their application.

The samples may consist of any combination of records, reports, plans, notifications, handouts or similar. Samples of documents typically relate to:

❯ General brigade, unit or similar level activities

❯ Hazard management activities

❯ Community engagement activities

❯ Pre-incident planning and incident management

❯ Training, assessment and/or excising activities.

> NOTE: Work sample assessments may be conducted just prior to the interview or undertaken as part of an assessment centre process.

Behavioural interviews

The interview is one of the most common forms of assessment. A structured interview allows interviewers to rate OpO candidates in a consistent, standardised manner.

Behavioural questions require OpO candidates to give examples of like roles or similar situations from their own experience and how they approached them, what they did and what were the results as well as any lessons learned. The following are examples of behavioural questions:

> **Question:** Tell me about a time when you had to analyse information and make a recommendation? What kind of thought process did you go through? Was the recommendation accepted? If not, why

> **Question:** Describe a project or idea (not necessarily your own) that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?

Multi-mini interviews

Another interview format is the multi-mini interview (MMI). The MMI uses many short independent assessments (behavioural questions), typically in a timed circuit, to assess candidates' skills, experience and abilities against the capabilities, knowledge and experience required for the role.

The MMI usually consists of approximately six interview stations, each being a timed (six-minute) interview scenario. Candidates rotate through the stations, each with its own interviewer and scenario. The reviewers then meet as a panel to agree on an overall assessment.

7.2 Assessment centre process (Capability Assessment)

How they work

NSW RFS Assessment Centres usually follow after the initial short-listing stages of the assessment process, i.e. cover letter, resume review and targeted questions. Each assessment centre is specifically designed for a particular OpO role (i.e. Level 1,2, or 3) with generic transferable capabilities in order to assess candidates' skills, experience and abilities against the capabilities, knowledge and experience required for the role.

A typical assessment centre incorporates a range of assessments in which your performance is observed and rated by a team of NSW RFS assessors.

This approach allows the full spectrum of capabilities for the role to be assessed using different tools or methods, but typically conducted in one session.

What to expect

At the beginning of the assessment centre, candidates will receive an initial briefing about the organisation and the structure of the day. Please allow a full day for the completion of the assessment centre.

7.3 The OpO Induction Course

The OpO Induction Course forms part of the merit-based selection process and is the final step in your journey to become an Operational Officer.

The induction course runs for about two weeks. The first half introduces all aspects of the OpO role. In the second half the participants research key aspects of the OpO role and present their findings to the remainder of the group. Theory papers conducted during the course and these presentations will all be assessed. The results of these assessments form part of the overall merit-based assessment for role selection.

7.4 Verbal discussions / Placement & Offer

Once the assessment panel has received approval to employ the successful candidate(s), an initial verbal or email contact may take place with the candidate as to the likelihood of an offer being made and to what location the candidate will be considered. Verbal / email contact should not be considered an offer of employment as formal offers of employment to an OpO role will be in official letter form.

7.5 Medical Assessment

External OpO candidates will be required to undertake a pre-employment medical to confirm good general health and wellbeing, this will be communicated to relevant candidates at the appropriate time. As work plans for OpO employees may include training, assessment or undertaking of specialist operational roles, good health is essential.

7.6 Feedback – Unsuccessful candidate(s)

Unsuccessful candidates will be advised in writing and offered an opportunity to receive feedback. This feedback is a useful way to understand the areas that could be strengthened in future applications.