Candidate information pack

Job title: Senior Assistant Scientist Organics Screening
Vacancy ID: 32060
Location: Leeds
Date: 08/10/2025

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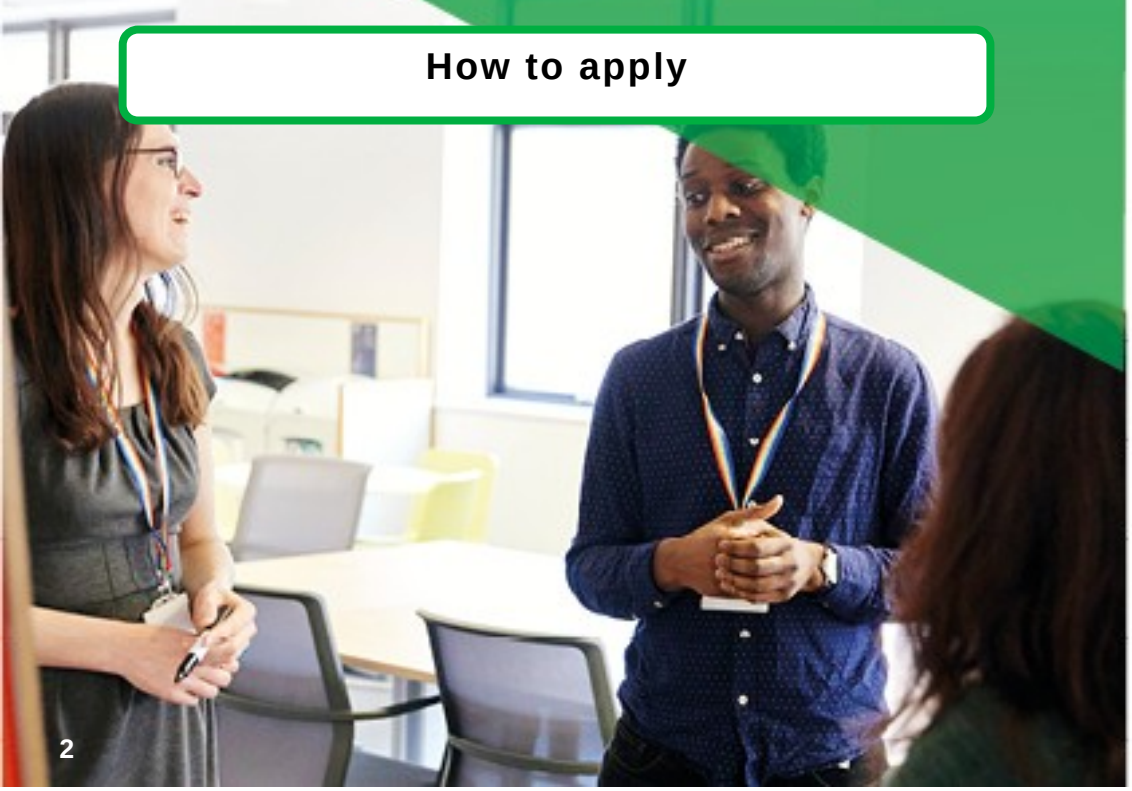


Our organisation

We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment. Acting to reduce the impacts of a changing climate on people and wildlife is at the heart of everything we do.

We reduce the risks to people, properties and businesses from flooding and coastal erosion. We protect and improve the quality of water, making sure there is enough for people, businesses, agriculture and the environment. Our work helps to ensure people can enjoy the water environment through angling and navigation.

We look after land quality, promote sustainable land management, and help protect and enhance wildlife habitats. And we work closely with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations.

We can't do this alone. We work with government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and communities to make our environment a better place for people and wildlife.

Of course, none of this will be possible without the professionalism and dedication of our employees. We are committed to promoting equality and diversity in all we do, and to valuing the diversity of our workforce, customers and communities.

We're committed to helping our people to find new ways of working and to maintain our focus on creating a better place for people and wildlife. For more information on the Environment Agency and what we do, please visit:

environmentagencycareers.co.uk

About us - Environment Agency - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Gov.uk | Twitter | Facebook | LinkedIn | Instagram | YouTube

The role

Our advert describes the day-to-day activities of the role, the team it operates within and the skills/experience we're looking for from applicants. This information should be read in conjunction with the job family role profile that we've attached to the vacancy.

In the Environment Agency, our roles are grouped by grade and similar characteristics into one of seven job families. Job families describe the work undertaken in broad terms. This enables us to use generic profiles to broadly describe 80% of the key accountabilities, skills and experience for each job family at each grade.

The role of Senior Assistant Scientist Organics Screening fits into our Technical & Scientific Services job family at grade 3.

Please contact the vacancy manager if you would like to discuss the role in more detail.

Salary and benefits

Join us in this role and you will enjoy the following benefits:

Grade Rate:	£29,751 (pro-rata - if part time or an assignment)
Location:	DEFRA GRP EA OLYMPIA HOUSE LABORATORY, LS12 6DD
Hours of work:	37 hours FTE, Permanent

Leave entitlement

Your leave allowance in this role will be 25 days or equivalent, depending on working pattern, plus bank holidays. Your allowance will be pro-rata if you work part time, or you are on an assignment to a role at a higher grade that attracts an increased entitlement. Your entitlement depends on your grade, your contracted hours, and your length of continuous service.

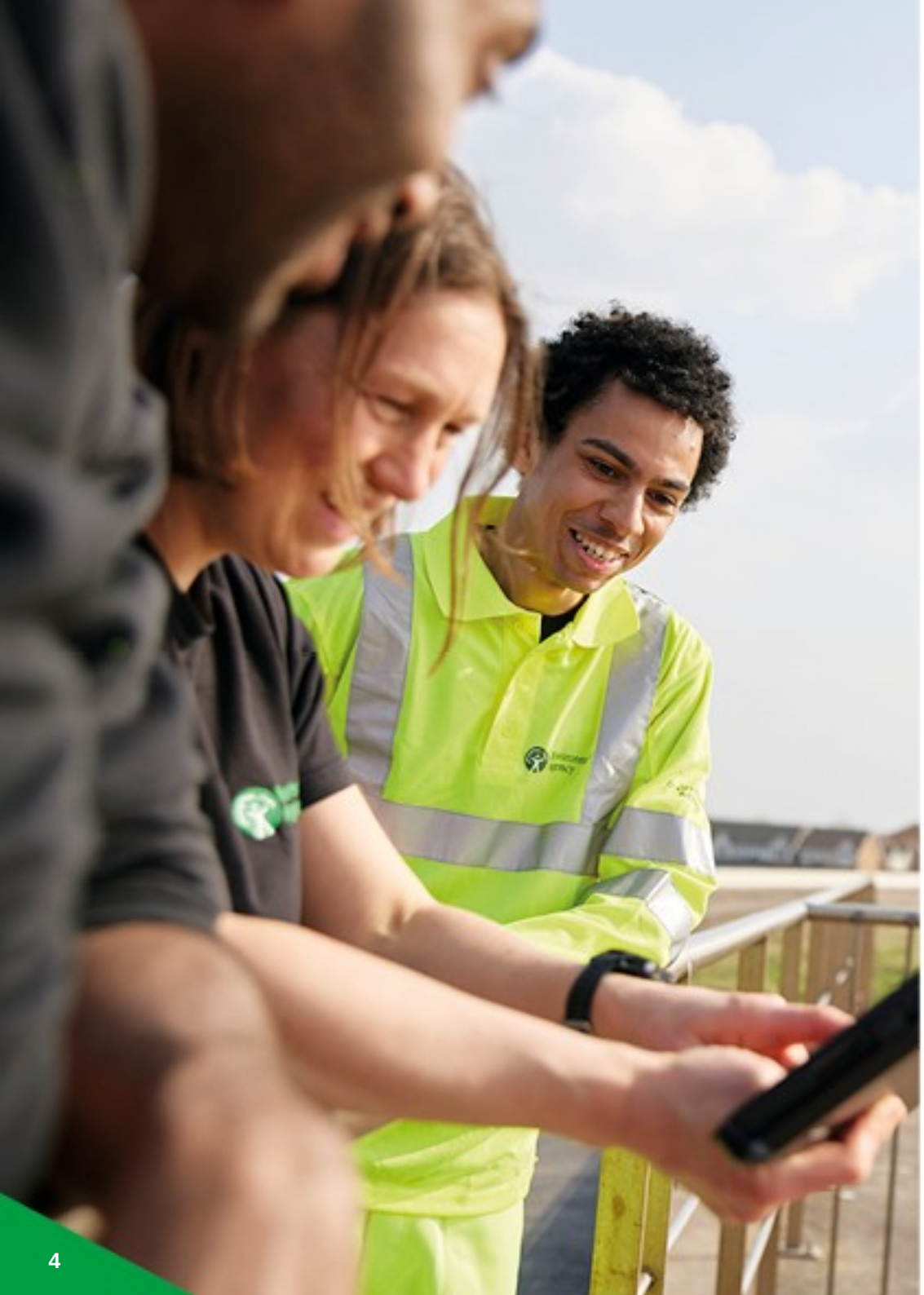
We offer up to two days paid environmental outcome days each year. These give you the opportunity to take part in community activities with a clear environmental outcome for people and wildlife.

Enhanced maternity, adoption and paternity leave, and sickness absence provisions are available.

Additional paid leave is available for employees taking part in public duties, trade union activities, special/trained forces and for health and safety representatives.

Work/life balance

We support flexible working hours and practices to help you achieve a good balance between your work life and your personal life. We will encourage you to keep developing your skills and professional knowledge throughout your career.



Pension

We will enroll you into the Environment Agency Pension Fund (EAPF) on commencing employment if your employment contract is for 3 months or more. The EAPF is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). It is a career average scheme, which means you will build up benefits based on your pay each scheme year rather than your final salary.

We will base your pension contributions on your actual pay and you will receive tax relief on your contributions. The pension contribution rates currently range between 5.5% to 12.5%. Whilst you are in the scheme, we will pay an employer contribution into your pension pot. We currently pay 19%, so this is a very generous scheme.

Relocation

For eligible roles, we may be able to offer financial assistance with the cost of relocation. This is normally in cases where the role is critical to the delivery of our business and where the vacancy has proven hard to fill due to scarcity of the required specialist, niche, or technical skills available in the market. Please speak to the hiring manager through the details provided in the advert to discuss whether the role you are applying for fits into this category.

Relocation support is not guaranteed and will be discussed upon request subject to you being offered a post with us.

Tenancy deposit loan

Our Tenancy Deposit Loan scheme assists employees directly employed by the Environment Agency in meeting the costs of a deposit for a privately rented home, which can sometimes act as a barrier to moving.

The scheme gives access to an interest free loan to pay for some or all of a deposit on a privately rented home. The loan can be paid back over a period of up to 12 months, directly from the monthly salary.

Future incident response

Incident response is an integral part of what the Environment Agency does. Our remit is wide ranging, and we are responsible for many incidents that affect the natural environment, human health, and property in England. When incidents happen, we strive to keep people safe and minimise serious and lasting damage to the environment and the communities we serve.

Everyone that joins us will undertake training and participate in our incident response. There are many exciting roles you could be doing anything from being on the scene of a waste fire advising the emergency services, to gathering and reporting vital information while working from home or one of our offices, visiting communities to warn and inform people about flood risk, providing specialist advice, or ensuring that urgent work in your team or department continues whilst your colleagues respond to incidents.

Some of our staff are required to carry out an incident role that involves being on on-call (standby) to work out of hours, this is usually 1 in every 8 weeks. Other incident roles are activated when they are needed. For these you will be given notice beforehand and have some flexibility on when and how you contribute. We want you to develop skills and feel confident in your incident role and will provide you with all the relevant professional training and peer support you need to deliver it.

Incident response has many rewards, including financial benefits for out of hours work. It provides our people with opportunities to develop new skills and work in a dynamic environment alongside new colleagues, local communities, and emergency response partners. We want the Environment Agency to be a life enhancing place to work. We will work with you to ensure you are able to participate in a way that suits you and supports a healthy work-life balance.

The Environment Agency is committed to be an inclusive employer. To achieve this in our incident roles workplace adjustments are available to support those with additional support needs, for example colleagues with a disability or a neurodiverse condition and/or colleagues with caring responsibilities.

Personal development

Performance management Individual performance plans, learning and development matched to your agreed career objectives and progression plans.

Learning and development A range of training courses, leadership development initiatives and access to learning and development materials are available, covering technical, managerial and personal skills.

Examination leave Paid leave for exams and revision for approved studies.

Professional subscriptions* We will pay the membership fees for one relevant professional association.

Mentoring and coaching access to support development and career progression.

Apprenticeships We offer over thirty different, fully funded, apprenticeship qualifications across our business. These allow eligible employees to gain technical qualifications (for example in civil or maintenance engineering) or in general business skills (for in Management, Leadership or Project Management). A number of these are offered up to and including degree level, allowing employees to obtain a Batchelor of Science (BSc) or Batchelor of Arts (BA) qualification that is fully funded by the Environment Agency.

If you are successful in securing a permanent role at the Environment Agency and meet the eligibility criteria you will have the opportunity to complete an apprenticeship that is linked with your role.

Work/life balance

Flexible Working Flexible working patterns including job share, home-based or hybrid working, and flexible working hours.

Travel and transport A range of travel and transport benefits. Discounts on Haven Holidays and HotelStay.

Shopping and leisure A variety of discounts at online stores and leisure experiences.

Health and wellbeing

Occupational health Access to Duradiamond Healthcare advisory service.

Eye care Free eye tests.

Employee assistance service Access to Workplace Wellness available to you and your family.

Sports and social club Opportunity to benefit from a wide range of subsidised events and discounts.

Health discount Optional discounts provided by a number of external providers and health clubs.

Local benefits These vary from region to region.

Finance

Interest free loan* For season tickets, bicycles and safety equipment.

Financial education club Providing guidance on how to manage your finances including information on credit scores, pensions, buying your first house and getting debt-free.

Tenancy deposit loan scheme* Access to an interest free loan to pay for some, or all of a deposit on a privately rented home.

The following benefits only apply to eligible roles:
Lease Car Scheme
Relocation Assistance
Free Car Parking

*May be subject to completion of probationary period.

Diversity and inclusivity

The Environment Agency values a diverse workforce and invites applications from anyone who wishes to join a workforce which values difference and welcomes everyone.

We aim to create and maintain a diverse workforce (including our Board and Executives) that better reflects the communities we serve. We recognise and strive to help people overcome the challenges and barriers that some individuals may experience in the job market, particularly if they come from a background that is currently underrepresented in our workforce. We are committed to being an inclusive employer and ensuring equal opportunities. Therefore, we particularly welcome applications from people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities; people with a disability; women; those part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Trans community (L.G.B. T+); and candidates from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds who are under-represented across some parts of our workforce.

We will consider flexible working patterns for all our vacancies, including job share.

We recruit based on merit. This means our selection process is designed to be fair, open and equal. Should you be invited to interview and need an adjustment to help you be at your best, we are eager to discuss this with you.

Our culture

Our aspired culture will enable us to deliver our goals and is summarised in the following statements, collectively known as ‘How We Do Things’:

- One team, one mission – create a better place.
- Focus on outcomes: deliver our commitments.
- Think big, act early, be visible.
- Seek partnership, show leadership, take responsibility.
- Innovate, move fast, stay agile.
- Value difference: include everyone.
- Be kind, stay safe and grow.

Our policies on bullying, harassment, and discrimination

We believe in providing a work environment that is free from bullying, harassment and discrimination, and that recognises the dignity of all our employees. We aim to ensure that our culture is built on mutual trust and respect, and everyone is treated with the dignity they deserve.

We will not tolerate bullying and harassment or discrimination, it is embedded in our code of conduct, and we have policies and guidance in place to support and protect all our employees. We have the following measures, should you witness, or be subject to bullying and harassment. You can:

- Talk to one of our Respect at Work advisors.
- Call the Employee Assistance Programme.
- Contact a trade union representative.
- Speak to your manager, or another you feel comfortable with.
- Speak to a colleague.

Disability Confident Scheme

We are committed to the Disability Confident Scheme. Applicants can choose to declare if they consider themselves to have a disability on their application form and if they want to be considered for the Disability Confident Scheme- we guarantee an interview for any person with a disability, defined by the Equality Act 2010 if:

- They have a physical or mental impairment.
- The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.

This positive action policy provides disabled applicants (which can include neurodiverse people and people with hearing loss and visual impairment) with the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage by offering an interview providing the candidate meets the ‘minimum criteria’ for the job. By ‘minimum criteria’ the applicant must provide us with evidence in their application form which demonstrates that they meet the level of competence required for each essential competency, as well as meeting any of the qualifications, skills or experience defined as essential. To apply under this scheme, please go to the “Equality and Diversity” section of your online application.
Please note, the Disability Confident Scheme secures an invitation to interview, providing you meet the minimum criteria, it does not guarantee a job. At interview, all applicants will be marked solely on merit.

Reasonable adjustments

Candidates can detail if they will require Reasonable Adjustments at any selection stage by completing the Additional Information section of their application. If adjustments have not been recorded, applicants can choose to declare this information at any point prior to interview or assessment by contacting the special point of contact listed on the advert.

Interview Stage:
Candidates will be asked about any reasonable adjustment that they might require during the interview process. This may include, for example, written version of interview questions, use of specialist software or additional time to complete an exercise, use of a sign language interpreter if a candidate is deaf.

On Appointment:
Any necessary workplace adjustments you require will be discussed and put in place before you start work.

Disability leave

Disability leave is a workplace adjustment to help you manage your disability at work. You may need additional time off to support you with the assessment, treatment or rehabilitation for your medical condition and disability leave is designed to cater for this.

If you have a “physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities” (Equality Act 2010) you may be eligible to request disability leave. This can include neurodiverse people and people with hearing loss or a visual impairment.

Employee networks

We have an increasing number of employee networks and forums that support our employees and help us build an inclusive culture, including:

- Autism and ADHD
- Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (B.A.M.E)
- Cancer
- Carers
- Chronic Pain
- Disability (such as dyslexia plus, hearing loss, visual impairment)
- EU Citizens
- Fatigue
- Faith and belief (such as Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh
- Gender Equality
- LGBT+
- Mental Health
- Respect at Work

Watch the video below to hear from some of our employees, and hear about their experience with us: Value difference: include everyone - YouTube

Further information

We will consider flexible working patterns for all our vacancies, including job share, so please let us know more at the assessment stage of the process.

Eligibility to apply and continuity of employment

Employment agency workers and contractors are considered to be external candidates and should therefore only apply for positions that are being advertised externally. They are not eligible to claim continuity of employment should they be successful in securing a position with the Environment Agency.

If you have been a member of a Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) in the last 12 months, we will not be able to continue with your application based on agreed appointment rules related to employing ex-RFCC members. We would welcome an application from you once the 12-month period have passed.

For applicants who currently work in local government or other bodies listed in the Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government etc.) (Modification) Order 1999, you may be eligible for continuous service for the purpose of calculating any future redundancy payment.

In addition, if you can demonstrate that you have worked at the Environment Agency immediately before joining the Civil Service and are now being re-employed by the Environment Agency within a period of three years of leaving, you may also count your Civil Service employment for the purpose of calculating your service-related entitlements as outlined above. If you are unsure of your status, you should contact your own HR Team.

Right to work and eligibility for employment

Before applying, it is the responsibility of all candidates to ensure they have the correct right to work documentation. If you require sponsorship, please ensure that the position you apply for meets the UK Visa & Immigration (UKVI) requirements. If selected, your appointment would be subject to you obtaining and maintaining the relevant work visa terms and conditions set for you by UKVI.

For further information, please visit: Work in the UK - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Skilled worker visa

For candidates looking to obtain a certificate of sponsorship and a skilled worker visa. In line with our allocation framework, we will consider requests for sponsorship subject to the candidate holding a current alternative visa due to expire within 3 months or in cases where the candidate does not have any other visa options to pursue other than skilled worker visa sponsorship.

Candidates note, even if successful in post, EA cannot guarantee if a certificate of sponsorship can be issued as this will depend on the role and personal circumstances satisfying UKVI eligibility and availability of sponsorship certificates we are able to issue.

Pre-employment checks

We apply the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) check when recruiting employees to our posts. This includes a basic criminal records check.

For the great majority of roles in the Environment Agency this will be sufficient and only certain roles will require a higher level of clearance. Should this be necessary, you will be advised of this during the recruitment process.

Positions based at our London office or roles that require frequent travel to London require Counter Terrorist Check (CTC) level security clearance. This will be confirmed to you during the recruitment process.

Want to find out more?

To find out more about what it's like to work at the Environment Agency, please visit: environmentagencycareers.co.uk/working-here

How to apply

We use an online recruitment system. To make the application process simple and straightforward, and so that you know how it works and what we need from you, we've put together a few hints and tips. Make sure you have all the information you need about the vacancy. For some jobs, you'll be asked to download a candidate pack, like this one, where you'll find specific application instructions.

The first thing you need to do is sign up to our recruitment system. You will need a valid e-mail address to log in and apply for opportunities, as all communication from us will be via e-mail. You can do this via the vacancy you are interested in by selecting 'Apply' at the bottom of the advert.

Once you've clicked this link you'll then be asked:

- Do you have the right to live and work in the UK?
- Do you have the required qualifications or equivalent experience, which were stated in the job advert?
- Are you currently an employee of this organisation?

Simply answer yes or no and you can carry on with your application. You'll then see the 'Register' page. Simply complete the details and select 'Submit Registration' and register to the system. You only need to sign up to the system once; you'll just be able to login next time.

When it comes to the actual application, you need to fill out each section, please be aware that the system will automatically time out if you are inactive for more than 60 minutes. This will result in any unsaved information being lost so make sure you save what you are doing regularly.

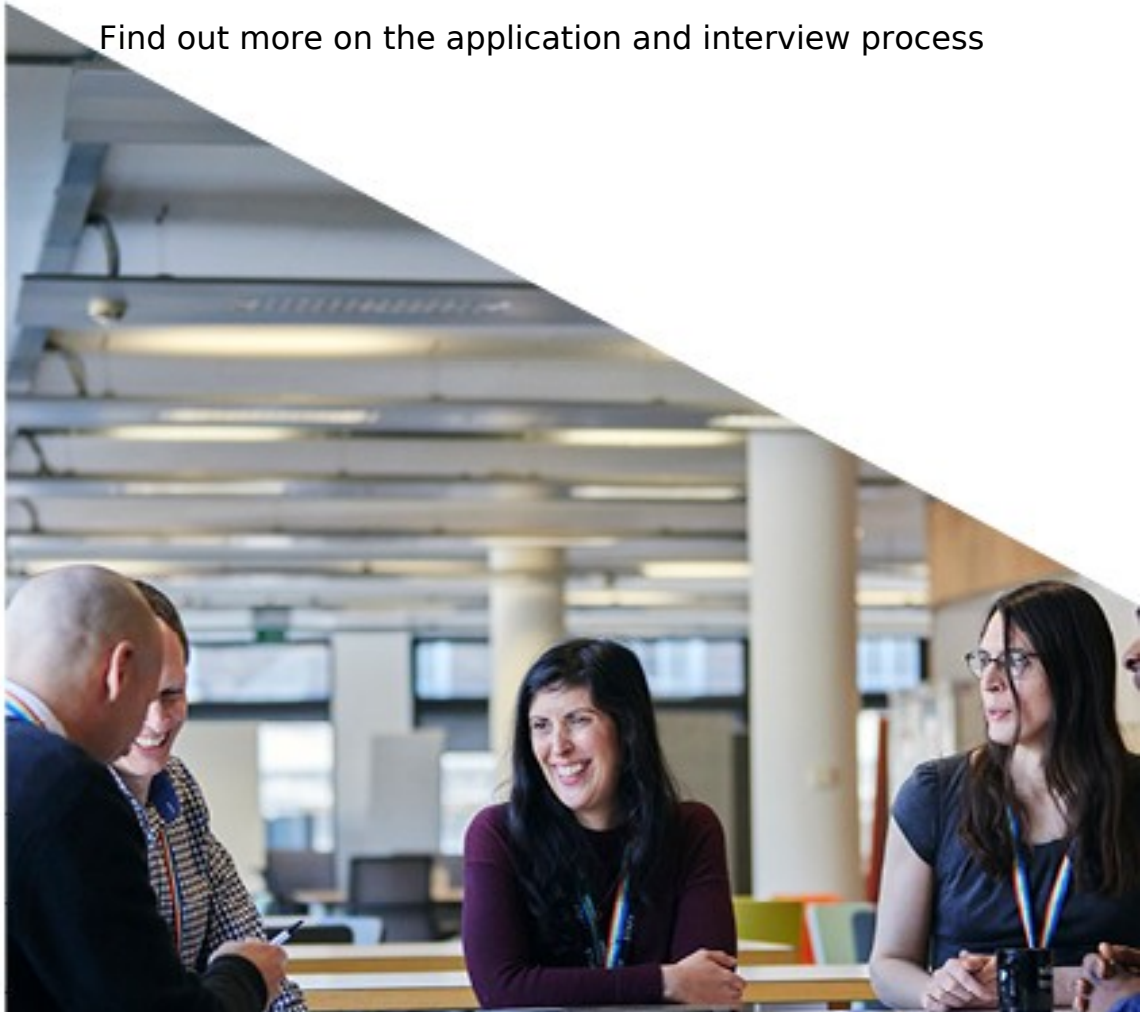
Start the process early to allow yourself time to answer the competency questions to the best of your ability.

Once you've finished, your details and information will be saved on the system for any future applications – of course, you can edit your details at any point.

When you apply to the Environment Agency for a job we will ask you to provide your personal data on our application form. We need this information so that we can establish your identity and your right to work in the UK.

You can read our Data Protection Statement on the application process page of our recruitment system. It is available for reference on each page of the actual application.

Find out more on the application and interview process



Competency questions

We're keen to know what makes you right for the job you're applying for and why we should ask you in for an interview. We use capabilities to form the competency questions at application and assessment and these competence questions/statements are your chance to convince us!

You should demonstrate how your skills, qualities and experience meet the requirements of the job (as described in the job advert and candidate pack). Instead of simply telling us, show us: use real life examples of where you've used a certain skill or how you've practically applied your experience.

You can use our Capability Dictionary to understand the indicators for the competencies you are being asked to demonstrate.
View the Capability Dictionary here

There's a 250-word limit per competence including spaces. It's an important part of the selection process so make sure you keep your statement relevant and concise. Think about what we need to know about you and what you'd bring to the role and our organisation.

Application questions

For some roles, we'll ask you some specific questions, like if you have a preferred work location. Candidates should be aware that our Marsham Street London office, operates under restricted capacity. Reference to Marsham Street as a base location option within selected job adverts is indicative only. Confirmation of Marsham Street as a contractual base is dependent upon business sign off and will be confirmed at the point of offer and contract.

If you are eligible for the Disability Confident Scheme and want your application to be considered on this basis, you can indicate this in the relevant section of your application form.

How to answer competency questions

Use the STAR method to plan your answers to interview questions and to show your skills and experience to answer capability questions.

What STAR stands for

- Situation - the situation you had to deal with
- Task - the task you were given to do
- Action - the action you took
- Result - what happened as a result of your action and what you learned from the experience

How to use STAR

You can use the STAR method to structure the examples you give to questions. You can use it to highlight particular skills and qualities you have that the employer is looking for.

When using STAR, remember:

- you can use examples from work, home or volunteering
- keep examples short and to the point
- be prepared to answer follow-up questions about the examples you give at the assessment stage.

Submitting your application

Once you've filled out and completed everything, you'll be prompted to submit your application. Simply click the button and you're done.

Please be aware that once you've submitted your application, with the exception of the 'Personal Details' section you will not be able to edit your application further. If you decide to withdraw your application, you will not be able to submit another application for the same vacancy.

If, at any stage, you have questions or problems, please contact the TBS Recruitment Team on 0345 241 5350 (Opt3) or email: defra-recruitment-enquiries@resourcing.soprasteria.co.uk . Alternatively, you can contact TBS via live chat here.

Application withdrawal

If you wish to withdraw your application this can be actioned via:

Logging into the application centre under your relevant application listed below the 'your applications' section, you may select the 'review status' page of your application. You may then select 'withdraw'. Once selected you will be asked to complete a form asking for the reason for your withdrawal before your application can be removed. You can also opt to withdraw by notifying defra-recruitment-enquiries@resourcing.soprasteria.co.uk and declaring your intention to withdraw your application.

Setting up 'job alerts'

You can set up email alerts for future vacancies advertised on the EA jobs board. You will automatically receive an email when a job that matches your criteria becomes available. To do this simply click on 'create a new job alert', enter your job criteria and save. Other vacancies are also available via our partner People Scout. You can request more information on these opportunities at earecruitment@peoplescout.co.uk.

Induction

From your first day, you will be assisted both at a team level by your line manager and by the wider EA Induction Team. The Induction Team run Welcome Day events that will provide you with an in-depth overview of the EA, your employee offer, and other benefits available to you at the EA. The Induction Team will also provide you with information that will support you in the first 6-months of your role via the Induction Pack and Induction SharePoint site. Any new starters who wish to contact the induction team, can do so via:

eainduction@environment-agency.gov.uk

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