

Assessment Events

How to create and implement neuro-inclusive Assessment Events.



About Assessment Events

Assessment Events use a combination of recruitment methods to evaluate candidates in a thorough and well-rounded way. These might include, work simulations, skills demonstrations, structured interviews, and work samples. They are often conducted over a short period, such as a one-day event.

These methods can also assess multiple candidates at the same time, making it an efficient approach to recruitment. By combining various assessment methods, employers can gain a deeper understanding of a candidate's skills, work style, and overall suitability for the role.

Benefits

The benefits may include:

- It is a comprehensive evaluation of skills.
- Reduces reliance on traditional methods, such as interviews, that may disadvantage neurodivergent candidates.
- Promotes inclusion as Assessment Events can be tailored to support accommodations, allowing candidates to do their best.
- Allows employers to assess multiple candidates at once, making them ideal for roles requiring large intakes.
- Gives candidates the opportunity to shine in ways traditional recruitment does not.



Ideal for:

Technology, healthcare, finance, and consulting, hospitality, agriculture, and customer service, project management, logistics, and sales roles.



Create and implement neuro-inclusive Assessment Events

Considerations and solutions

There are considerations to address to ensure the assessment is neuro-inclusive. These include:

Considerations

Resourcing:

Assessment events require significant time and resources to plan, coordinate, and execute effectively.

Candidate overwhelm:

Neurodivergent candidates, such as autistic individuals or those with anxiety, may find the comprehensive nature of these events overwhelming, potentially affecting their performance. Long waiting periods or poorly managed schedules can exacerbate this.

Time management:

Poor scheduling can lead to long gaps between tasks, which can disrupt momentum and disengage candidates. This is particularly problematic for candidates with ADHD, who may struggle with prolonged inactivity.

Solutions

Leverage technology and create reusable frameworks for future events to reduce preparation time and costs. Additionally, consult experts in neurodiversity to ensure the design is inclusive and minimises barriers.

Provide candidates with clear, detailed information about the event, including a schedule and task descriptions. Offer accommodations, such as sensory-friendly spaces or flexible task formats, to create a comfortable environment.

Design events with structured and balanced schedules, ensuring appropriate breaks while maintaining a consistent flow. Activities should build on each other to sustain engagement and energy levels.

Example: Agriculture industry

Sun Pork, recognising that “Traditional recruitment practices such as job interviews can cause distress and are poorly suited to otherwise capable employees,” partnered with Autism CRC to launch the “Autism and Agriculture: Diverse People, Exceptional Care” initiative. Developed in collaboration with Autism SA, this initiative aimed to overhaul the standard recruitment process to better accommodate neurodivergent individuals. It began with an Expression of Interest that asked candidates to submit a one-page profile, providing insights into their personal backgrounds and motivations for working in the agricultural industry. This format was designed to allow candidates to present themselves in a narrative form, a method more conducive to their expressive capabilities. Selected candidates were then invited to participate in a tailored assessment event, which included various practical tasks such as manoeuvring around fences, injecting oranges, and completing data entry activities. These tasks were carefully chosen to mirror actual job duties at Sun Pork, allowing candidates to demonstrate their skills in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Source: <https://sunporkfreshfoods.com.au/autism-and-agriculture/>

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Assessment Events

Conducting neuro-inclusive Assessment Events

Assessment Events offer a unique opportunity to evaluate candidates comprehensively, but to ensure inclusivity for neurodivergent individuals, it's essential to tailor both in-person and virtual settings. This guide outlines strategies for creating neuro-inclusive Assessment Events, fostering a fair and equitable recruitment experience, enabling all participants to demonstrate their potential for the role.

Pre-assessment preparation

Preparing for an Assessment Event is essential to creating an inclusive and supportive environment, particularly for neurodivergent candidates. Clear communication, appropriate training, and thoughtful accommodations ensure all candidates can approach the event with confidence and perform to the best of their abilities.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Neurodivergent awareness training

Ensure all assessors involved in the assessment event process understand common neurodivergent characteristics and how these may present in the event context. This training reduces unconscious bias and equips assessors to support candidates effectively, helping them show their true potential.

Provide details

Offer candidates insight into the assessment objectives and requirements, including logistics like timings, and any necessary documents.

For in-person Assessment Events:

- The schedule, including start and end times
- Access details (location, parking, public transport, signing-in procedures)
- Venue details, including sensory information and breakout spaces
- Names, roles, and photographs of interviewer (as relevant)
- Dress code recommendations
- Necessary documents to bring
- Contact details of a dedicated support person from the organisation to answer questions.

For virtual Assessment Events:

- A link to the virtual platform and instructions on testing access in advance
 - Clear guidance on how to use features like breakout rooms, chat functions, or screen sharing
 - The schedule for the event, including times and types of tasks
 - Information on camera use.
For example, "You may turn your camera off during the group discussion if preferred."
 - A contact number or email for technical support during the session.
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Create and implement neuro-inclusive Assessment Events

Pre-assessment preparation - Continued

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Access guide

Provide a detailed access guide to help candidates familiarise themselves with the space and feel comfortable navigating the environment.

For in-person Assessment Events, include:

- Photographs of the venue
- Identify sensory elements including noise levels, lighting, and smells
- Highlight accessibility features, including ramps, lifts, and railings
- Identify pathways to key areas, such as the assessment room and restrooms
- Share the location of quiet rooms and provide step-by-step instructions on how to access it.

For virtual assessment events, include:

- Include screenshots of the virtual platform interface and instructions on navigating features like chat, breakout rooms, and muting/unmuting microphones.
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Accommodations

Encourage candidates to request accommodations in advance to address any specific needs and ensure equitable participation. Such as flexible timings, assistive technology, extended deadlines, or the presence of a support person.

Agenda and task descriptions

Clearly outline the sequence of activities, including breaks and task requirements, so candidates can prepare mentally and logistically. Also include information about the number of participants.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Assessment Events

Creating inclusive environments

The environment in which an Assessment Event takes place plays a significant role in candidate performance. For neurodivergent candidates, sensory distractions, unfamiliar settings, or inaccessible platforms can present additional barriers.

Neuro-inclusive strategies Applicable to: In-person Assessment Events

Site visit
Allow candidates to visit the location of the event during a quiet time before the event to support familiarity. This reduces anxiety, builds confidence, and helps candidates perform at their best.

Sensory-friendly settings

- Minimise loud, continuous noise
(For example, humming from coffee machines)
- Avoid sudden loud noises, like doors slamming
- Ensure consistent, non-flickering lighting
- Avoid strong smells from perfumes, kitchens, or nearby restrooms
- Provide simple décor and communicate any potential sensory stimuli in advance
- Provide a range of sensory items that the assessor and candidate can use
- Provide a range of alternative seating options and encourage them to move furniture around.



Ask the candidate:
"How can we make the assessment more comfortable for you?"

Minimised sensory triggers
Put mitigation strategies in place to manage loud noises, physical touch, sudden interruptions, or visual clutter in the environment.

Break spaces
Identify a space where candidates can take breaks before or during the event to re-regulate.

Neuro-inclusive strategies Applicable to: Virtual Assessment Events

Platform accessibility
Use platforms that support screen readers, text magnification, and captioning, such as Zoom™ or Microsoft Teams with built-in accessibility features.

Break spaces
Set up virtual breakout rooms where candidates can take breaks if needed. Alternatively, schedule short, structured breaks between activities to allow time for re-regulation.

Quiet and flexible settings

- Allow candidates to turn off cameras if they feel more comfortable
- Permit candidates to use chat functions instead of speaking, if speaking is challenging.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Assessment Events

During the assessment

The assessment itself can present barriers for neurodivergent candidates, such as heightened stress, difficulties interpreting unstructured social interactions, or challenges with abstract questions.



Neuro-inclusive strategies

Applicable to: In-person Assessment Events



Welcome

Meet candidates at the door. Ensure assessors wear clearly labelled clothing and name tags to help candidates distinguish between assessors and other participants. Begin with a brief tour of the event space, highlighting key areas such as bathrooms.



Allow time to get comfortable

Allow candidates time to settle into the environment before starting assessments.



Assessment framework

Use a objective scoring system to evaluate responses to job-relevant criteria consistently.



Break out spaces

Remind participants of the breakout spaces, offering a space to re-regulate.



Direct and clear information

Use straight-forward language

Be mindful of literal interpretations; avoid idiomatic language and jargon.

Avoid double-barrelled questions

For example, "Tell me about a time you resolved a conflict and worked as part of a team",



Task flexibility

Multiple formats

Offer options for completing tasks to accommodate different preferences and strengths. Allow candidates to submit a written solution to a task instead of a verbal explanation.

Extended time

Remove or extend time limits for tasks, particularly for cognitive or written assessments.



Structured interactions

Clear instructions

Use straightforward, step-by-step language to explain tasks and expectations.

Supportive facilitation

Train assessors to understand neurodivergent needs and provide support when required.



Inclusive group activities

Balanced dynamics

Monitor group activities to ensure all participants have equal opportunities to contribute.

Encourage alternatives

Allow candidates to contribute via written notes if they find verbal participation challenging.



Create and implement neuro-inclusive Assessment Events

During the assessment - continued

- Neuro-inclusive strategies**
Applicable to: Virtual Assessment Events

Welcome and orientation
Begin with a brief virtual orientation to introduce assessors, explain the format, and provide a virtual tour of the platform's features, such as breakout rooms, chat functions, and support options.

Technical support
Assign a tech-support person to assist candidates with connectivity issues or navigation challenges during the event.

Flexible communication options
Allow candidates to communicate in their preferred format, such as using the chat function instead of speaking or submitting written responses.

Room acclimatisation
Allow time without expectations to allow candidates to settle into the virtual environment and familiarise themselves with platform tools.

A reminder of break out spaces
Direct candidates to virtual breakout rooms, offering a quiet space for re-regulation.

Task flexibility

- Multiple formats**
Offer options for completing tasks to accommodate different preferences and strengths, such as written, verbal, or visual responses.
- Extended time**
Remove or extend time limits for tasks, particularly for cognitive or written assessments, to reduce pressure and allow candidates to perform at their best.

Structured interactions

- Clear instructions**
Use straightforward, step-by-step language to explain tasks and expectations.
- Supportive facilitation**
Train assessors to understand neurodivergent needs and provide support when required.

Inclusive group activities

- Balanced dynamics**
Monitor group activities to ensure all participants have equal opportunities to contribute.
- Encourage alternatives**
Allow candidates to contribute via written notes, chat functions, or other formats if they find verbal participation challenging.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Assessment Events

Post-assessment practices

The post-assessment phase is an important part in creating a positive candidate experience, especially for neurodivergent individuals. Clear communication, constructive feedback, and opportunities for candidates to provide input ensure the process is successful. By implementing these strategies, employers can foster trust and demonstrate their commitment to inclusivity.



Neuro-inclusive strategies

Applicable to: Stand alone Work Samples and Work Samples paired with Interviews



Clear timelines for results

Share explicit timelines for when candidates will receive feedback or outcomes.



Provide constructive feedback

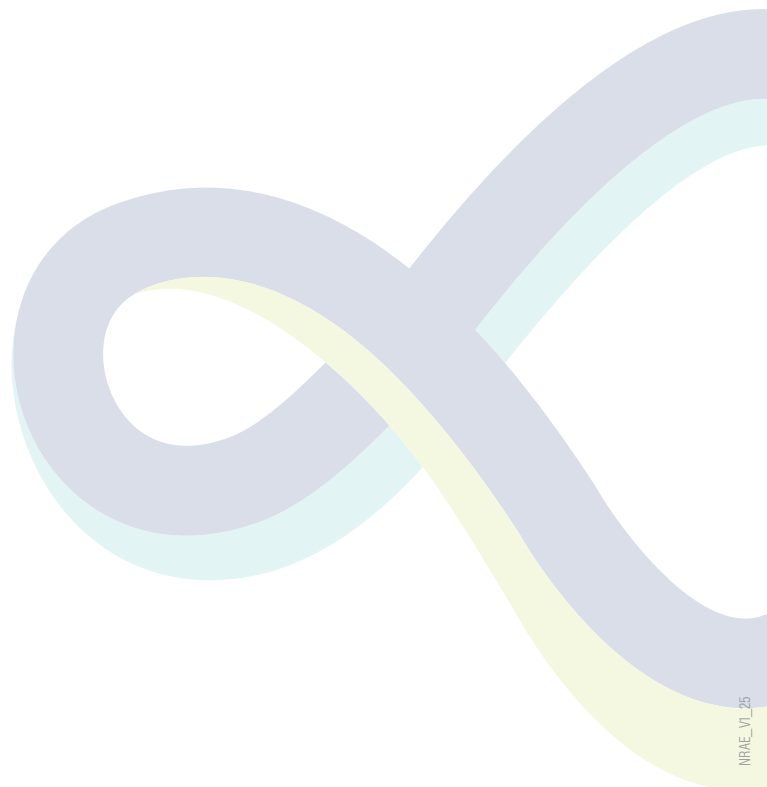
Provide detailed feedback highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Avoid vague statements like, "You interviewed well."

For example, "Your analytical approach to solving the case study was excellent, and we appreciated your ability to articulate data-driven solutions. To improve, consider providing more concise explanations in time-sensitive scenarios."



Collect feedback

Collect feedback around inclusivity to refine and improve future Assessment Events.



Example of an in-person neuro-inclusive Assessment Event

Scenario

Recognising that traditional recruitment practices like interviews often disadvantage neurodivergent candidates, a national supermarket chain redesigned its recruitment process to better accommodate neurodivergent individuals and those with diverse needs. The updated approach used a tailored assessment.



Redesign your recruitment process by utilising Assessment Events.

Actions taken

Inclusive application methods

Instead of a formal resume, candidates submitted a short profile, highlighting their interests, preferred working styles, and motivations for working in the supermarket industry.

Relevant assessment tasks

Selected candidates were invited to an assessment event featuring practical tasks that reflected job duties, such as:

- Stocking task: Candidates organised items on shelves using a provided diagram, testing their attention to detail and organisational skills.
- Customer interaction role-play: Facilitators simulated a customer query to evaluate communication and problem-solving in a low-pressure setting.
- Inventory activity: Candidates counted and recorded items from a small stock display.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

The event was conducted during quiet hours to reduce noise and sensory distractions. Task instructions were provided in both written and visual formats, ensuring clarity for all participants. A quiet breakout space was available for candidates to use if they needed a break during the event.

Outcome

These practical, inclusive methods enabled candidates to showcase their abilities directly related to supermarket tasks without the stress of traditional interview formats.



Example of a virtual neuro-inclusive Assessment Event

Scenario

A cybersecurity company recognised that traditional interviews and time-pressured coding tests often excluded neurodivergent talent with exceptional technical skills.

To create a more inclusive process, the company designed a virtual assessment event tailored to evaluate candidates for roles such as threat analysis and data security without the stress of conventional recruitment methods.



Actions taken

Inclusive application methods

Candidates were asked to submit a short personal profile outlining their technical interests, problem-solving approaches, and motivations for working in cybersecurity. This replaced traditional cover letters and allowed candidates to apply in a format that suited them.

Relevant assessment tasks

Selected candidates were invited to an assessment event featuring practical tasks that reflected real job duties, such as:

- Simulated threat analysis task: Candidates analysed a sample dataset of network traffic to identify potential security threats. They were given a structured, step-by-step guide to complete the task, ensuring clarity.
- Problem-solving scenario: Candidates were presented with a real-world case study, such as mitigating a cyberattack on a fictional organisation, and asked to outline their approach in a document or presentation.
- Tool familiarisation activity: Candidates explored a cybersecurity simulation tool in a guided session and demonstrated their ability to navigate the platform.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

- Instructions were provided in multiple formats (written, visual, and video tutorials) to accommodate diverse learning styles.
- Candidates were allowed to submit responses in their preferred format, such as a recorded video explanation, a written report, or a slide deck presentation.
- Tasks were broken into smaller, manageable sections with clear transitions and a defined structure to reduce cognitive load.
- A dedicated technical support contact was available during the event to address connectivity or platform navigation issues.

Outcome

This inclusive virtual Assessment Event allowed candidates to demonstrate their technical skills and problem-solving abilities in a supportive, flexible environment. By focusing on practical tasks reflective of the cybersecurity role, the company identified talented candidates who excelled in real-world scenarios, many of whom might have been overlooked in a traditional recruitment process.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Assessment Events

Continuous improvement

Regular updates ensure processes remain relevant, equitable, and accessible.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Feedback analysis

Regularly collect feedback from candidates and assessors to identify areas for improvement.

Staff training

Continuously educate assessors on neuro-inclusive best practices.

Tool updates

Incorporate assistive tools, such as accessible platforms or automated submission checks, to streamline the process.

By adopting these strategies, employers can create neuro-inclusive Assessment Events that empower all candidates to do their best.

Learn more and access resources

To learn more about Neuro-inclusive Recruiting and how to create and maintain neuro-inclusive workplaces, scan the QR code or visit neuroinclusiverecruiting.org.au.

