



Government  
Digital Service

GDS

## Applying for a content designer job

This guide is designed to help you apply for a content designer job at the Government Digital Service (GDS). We talk about:

- what a content designer does
- the GOV.UK style and design guidelines
- the skills needed to become a content designer
- where we advertise our roles
- the application and sifting process
- diversity and inclusion at GDS

### What do content designers do?

Content designers make complex information simple.

They create clear and easy-to-understand content that is based on research into users and their online behaviour, and data such as analytics.

We know that people who access GOV.UK want to complete certain tasks, such as registering to vote or applying for a driver's licence. And they want to do it quickly and easily. Content designers create content that makes it easy for users to get the information they need at the point they need it to complete tasks.

As a content designer at GDS, you could be doing many different things. It depends on the type of team you are in.

## **Product or mission teams**

If you work in a product or mission team, you will join other content designers, user researchers, developers and performance analysts in delivering products such as [GOV.UK Notify](#). You'll work with departments to understand what users need to know.

Together, you and your team will work to develop a first version of the product, followed by improved versions based on user research and feedback from users, policy teams and other experts. You will be the main source of content design expertise in your team, so you will be sharing good content design practice with them.

## **GOV.UK content team**

If you join the GOV.UK content team, you will work collaboratively with other government departments to produce and improve content on GOV.UK. In this role, you will primarily be working with other content designers, user researchers and performance analysts. You'll help other government departments and organisations plan content projects and work with government policy experts to create and improve the most used (highest traffic) content on GOV.UK.

Whichever team you join, you'll be working in a collaborative way. Every day will start with a short meeting with your whole team to discuss what everyone is working on and to raise any issues or problems. This is a great way to understand the breadth of work your team is doing and to identify opportunities for collaborative working.

## **The GOV.UK style and design principles**

Did you know that:

- half of the UK workforce has a reading age of 11 or younger?
- 6 million people in the UK are dyslexic?
- 4.2 million people in the UK have English as their second language?

These are just some of the statistics that inform our approach to content design and the [GOV.UK style guide](#), and help us to meet user needs.

We use a number of methods to make sure we provide good content, such as:

- writing in plain English: we write in plain English because it makes it easier for all citizens to complete the task they need to do
- front-loading titles, where the most important information or word is at the beginning
- putting the most important information at the top of the page
- using simple sentences - usually no more than 25 words
- creating short paragraphs

Our [Content Design manual](#) gives more information on how we plan, write and manage content. To make sure we follow consistent style, spelling and grammar on GOV.UK, we follow the [GOV.UK style guide](#).

## **Skills you need to become a content designer**

There are several levels of role in content design at GDS, from associate content designer all the way to head of content design. Each role needs particular skills but the main [skills and knowledge](#) you'll need are:

- awareness of agile methodologies, particularly in relation to content improvement
- prototyping
- stakeholder relationship management
- strategic thinking
- user focus
- user-centred content design

## **Where we advertise our jobs**

We advertise all our jobs on our [Career site](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Civil Service jobs](#).

If you're interested in working here, you should set up alerts to let you know that we are hiring. In addition, you can follow us on Twitter at [GDSTeam](#) and [GOVUK](#), where we aim to post information about all of our job vacancies.

## **Our application process**

Like the rest of the Civil Service, GDS offers objective recruitment, based on your skills and experience. This means we'll need more than your word that you've got the skills and experience we're looking for - you will need to demonstrate that you have them.

You need to know about the following to apply for a role:

- the job advert
- Civil Service Success Profiles
- how to make an application
- how we sift applications

### **The job advert**

The job advert consists of the following sections:

- introduction to GDS
- general description of the role
- required skills

The job advert will link to the following:

- [things you need to know about GDS](#) - this gives you an overview of GDS and what it does
- the [GDS blog](#) - we aim to publish blogs regularly, to share what we're doing as part of our commitment to transparent working

### **Civil Service Success Profiles**

The [Success Profiles](#) are a cross-Civil Service framework that lists up to 5 elements that will be used to assess your suitability for the role you're applying for. It complements the job advert, and identifies a range of skills and behaviours that complement the technical requirements of the role outlined in the job advert.

### **Your application**

You will need to apply with a covering letter and a copy of your CV. Each of these plays a specific role in the application process.

The role of your CV is to summarise the experience you have and where you have worked, as well as provide a sense of your career history. Although we're interested in your educational qualifications, we're most interested in where you've worked, your responsibilities and what you've achieved. Put your work history and experience first, before your educational qualifications. You should also include details of your voluntary work, to reflect the full

breadth of relevant experience. Your CV should give insight into your career story. It is the scaffolding that supports the information you provide in your covering letter.

The covering letter should explain how you meet the required skills and experience outlined in the job advert, including the relevant points from the Success Profiles Framework.

We'll look at the covering letter to gain a deeper understanding of what's outlined in your CV, and to understand the impact of your work. It's a mechanism for you to give more information about yourself. Take the opportunity to present yourself in the best light and to showcase the best of your experience. In some instances, we may ask you to answer a specific question in relation to yourself and your skills as someone working in content design.

### **Application tips**

We may be looking at more than 100 applications for a content designer role at GDS. We will consider your application on its merits, but you should think about how you can help us assess it fairly.

- Read the job advert carefully and pay particular attention to the skills section. What skills do you need to do the job? Think about your experience in relation to each one. What examples do you have to demonstrate that you have the skill we are looking for?
- Now look at the [Success Profiles Framework \(SPF\)](#) and the behaviours we call out in the job advert. Go to the SPF document, read the relevant descriptions associated with the SPF behaviours and consider how your background and experience can be used to illustrate your suitability for the role in relation to them.

### **The sifting process**

A number of content design experts read the applications and score them. Scoring is a fair way for us to assess applicants' skills and experience against what we're looking for in the role. We call this the sifting process.

After this, and once all scores have been agreed, the sifters pick the top-scoring applications to put forward for the next part of the process.

## **Disability Confident and Veteran schemes**

Anyone applying under the Disability Confident Scheme and Veteran Scheme who meets the minimum criteria for the role will make it to the next stage.

## **The content design task**

If you are selected for this stage of the process, you will be invited to complete a content task. This is designed to test your technical ability and your understanding of key GOV.UK principles.

You will need to complete the task and return it by the specified deadline. Your task will be assessed and, if you score highly enough, you will be invited to interview.

## **The interview**

Depending on the volume of applications we may include a telephone interview stage, which is shorter than the face-to-face interview.

For the face-to-face interview you will be interviewed by a panel of three who will ask you questions based on the criteria required for the role in line with the [Success Profiles Framework \(SPF\)](#).

We value your experience during the interview, so we aim to provide an inclusive interview panel, structure and process. All of your answers will be scored on merit in accordance with the criteria required in relation to the Success Profiles.

## **Diversity and inclusion at GDS**

Public services need to be inclusive. We're working towards this as an organisation, from making sure our recruitment is as good as it can be, to supporting each other and making changes so GDS is a fair and inclusive place to work.

We aim to make sure that we reflect the communities we serve, which means our content community needs to be diverse and inclusive. We welcome applications from all backgrounds and especially from under-represented groups. Our recruitment process is fair and open and is based solely on merit.

We have active staff networks at GDS, among them our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community, our Women's Network, our Disability Community and our Mental

Health and Wellbeing group. We support all of our staff to achieve their best and develop their skills.

### **Other sources of information**

- [Blog: How we built and ran 'Introduction to content design', and how to sign up](#)
- [Podcast: content design](#)
- [Blog: About the Government Digital Service](#)
- [Blog: How we made GOV.UK more accessible](#)