

NZ Casting Director Guidelines

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Casting Directors

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Input received from

Equity New Zealand
Actors Agents Association of New Zealand

Introduction

New Zealand Casting Directors, Equity New Zealand and the Actors Agents Association of New Zealand believe both as a group and individually that all casting practices should be performed/undertaken with the intention of attaining the best possible result from every person who auditions.

These guidelines outline the best practice for casting in New Zealand for professional recorded performance.

Definitions

Casting Director (CD) - the person or entity hired by the Producer to help find the best Performer for each role through an audition process or otherwise.

Performer - the person auditioning for the acting role.

Agent - the person or entity engaged by the Performer to help them gain acting roles.

Producer - the person or entity which plans and coordinates the making of a TVC/TV drama/film etc.

Director - the person who controls the creative content of the production and performances.

Process

A Producer and/or Director of a TVC or drama project engages a Casting Director to help find the Performers for their project. They will specify the number of roles, the type of Performer

they would like, the fee for the role, the terms of the usage contract, and relevant dates for the project. Once all necessary details have been agreed, a Casting Brief is sent to Agents who may submit Performers they feel are appropriate for the role.

The Casting Director selects the Performers that they feel are best suited to the role and arranges via the Agent to audition those Performers as required. All relevant information including scripts, character outlines & synopses are given to the Performer via their Agent. Usually the more information a Performer has about the role prior to auditioning, the better. The Agent will ensure that any relevant conditions provided on the brief are met and that any restrictions the Performer has are communicated to the Casting Director before an audition is confirmed.

After the audition process when a specific Performer is confirmed for the role, that Performer is offered the role via their Agent who then enters into specific contract negotiations with the Producer/s. On occasion the Producer/s may be represented by the Casting Director in the negotiation and contracting process.

This document will be revised biennially and widely distributed in a link.

GUIDELINES PART A – PREPARATION FOR AUDITIONS

1. Advance Notice of Audition

(a) The parties acknowledge that adequate preparation time is essential to allow Performers to prepare for an audition. However, Casting Directors may need to ask for urgent auditions and also book actors the day before for auditions when others have withdrawn. This provides an opportunity for other Performers to be seen in this timeslot.

Where the Performer is required to prepare a dialogue piece for a TV drama or Film audition the Casting Director will endeavour to give 72 hours' notice, with a minimum of 48 hours' notice. Where possible, 72 hours' notice will be provided but it is understood this is not always possible due to production time and budget constraints, especially where urgent re-casting of a role is required. This is also dependent on the role size and number of scenes required. Shorter lead in time may require script in hand.

(b) For TVC auditions that require dialogue, best practice is that Casting Directors will try to provide 36 hours notice. However, it is recognised and accepted that at times this may be unachievable due to last minute changes by agency creatives and/or clients to the script, as well as budget and timeline constraints imposed on the casting process.

(c) It is not considered best practice to notify the Agent or Performer after hours or on a weekend of an urgent audition. The relationship most CDs have with Agents allows them to contact each other on the weekends given urgent circumstances and, hopefully, pre-warning.

(d) The Casting Director may fill the audition slot with another actor, with notice, if the agent and/or performer does not respond in a reasonable amount of time. It is the actor's

responsibility to be readily available to their agent so that they can receive materials and have adequate time to prepare for their audition.

2. Scripts & Other Relevant Character/Role Information

(a) In the case of TVCs a script will be provided as part of the Casting Brief. When a script is deemed commercially sensitive by the Client/Producer and cannot be released the Casting Director will provide as much material as is needed for the audition.

(b) In the case of Film & TV Drama/Comedy, an audition script, a synopsis and character description will be provided to the Agent, along with an indication of the size of the role, whether a project has been greenlit and how it is funded. In addition, the Casting Director will use best practice to provide the screenplay 72 hours prior to the audition.

The importance of access to a script is acknowledged, but this is at the discretion of producers. Sometimes due to development stages and drafts in progress this is not always possible. This section is really project dependent, there are IP and confidentiality issues. It may be that generic scenes and dummy character names need to be provided, and no script or minimal background information is supplied. These projects are unusual but do happen at times. In these circumstances Casting Directors do as much as possible to help actors in-person when auditioning.

In an emergency where it is not possible to provide the script or screenplay 72 hours in advance, the Performer shall be given the opportunity to read the script/screenplay at their Agent's premises or at the place of the audition prior to commencement. Where audition scripts have not been provided 72 hours in advance, the performer is entitled to audition with script in hand.

It is the Producer's responsibility to provide all scripts for the Agents for drama productions.

(c) It is the responsibility of the Agent to provide all material specified in (a) and (b) above to the auditioning Performer.

(d) It is the Performer's responsibility to receive the script and other relevant material from their Agent, and to prepare appropriately.

It is expected that a Performer will read any scripts, synopses and character notes relevant to, and learn any dialogue necessary for, the audition. However, given the reality that many auditions do not have the ideal lead-in times, it is acknowledged that a well-rehearsed reading for the initial audition can be adequate. The casting process is to attain the best possible result from every person who auditions, which, for some people, may not include a memory test.

Any clarification on dialogue the actor has been given should be checked with the Agent prior to auditioning.

(e) It is required that all information about an audition, scripts, and product be treated with utmost confidentiality by all parties.

3. Accents

(a) The parties recognise the importance of providing the Performer with an adequate opportunity to research and prepare when an accent is required for an audition. When an accent is required to be prepared best practice is for the Casting Director to give the information to the Agent at least 72 hours prior to the audition.

There are many websites to provide guidance. For example:

[ACCENT 1](#)

[ACCENT 2](#)

(b) It is expected that where an accent is specified that the Performer will prepare their audition with that accent.

(c) Performers should be advised in advance if they may be required to ad lib in one or more accents.

4. Availability for Shoot Dates and Shoot Location

(a) Shoot Dates and Location will be specified by the Casting Director in the Casting Brief.

(b) It is the responsibility of the Actor's Agent to inform the Actor of such shoot dates and location at the time of offering an audition.

(c) It is the Performer's responsibility to make sure they are aware of such shoot dates and location before they agree to an audition. The agent has a responsibility to ensure the performer's dates are clear, especially around calendars for other projects. It is expected that Agents and Performers will disclose all known availability issues at the time to their best of their knowledge.

(d) Any known availability issues for the nominated shoot dates must be discussed with a Casting Director via the Agent before any audition is confirmed.

(e) Any changes to shoot dates after the audition and prior to confirmation to be notified to casting as soon as practicable.

(f) It is the Casting Director's responsibility to state the location/s of the shoot and also to clarify whether or not the project is local hire or national. In the case of local hire, all actors auditioning or providing self-tests must do so with the understanding that they are to be considered local in that shoot location. In the case of a national hire, the production will bear the costs of travel, accommodation and per diems.

GUIDELINES PART B – THE AUDITION

5. Privacy during the Audition

Auditions will be held in a private setting wherever possible, especially in the case of drama/film. There are, however, some circumstances where an audition may need to be held in a public space. This is especially so in the case of a TVC where an exterior location is required to demonstrate a special skill, e.g. skateboarding in a skateboard park. Where the audition is not to be held in private, the Performer is to be notified no later than the booking of the audition.

6. Professional Performer as Reader

The parties recognise the importance of allowing the Performer to read in an audition with an experienced and professional actor. Where a Performer is auditioning for a leading role in a TV drama/film the Casting Director will make all reasonable attempts to ensure a professional performer is engaged as reader. CD will advise the Performer's Agent no later than the booking for the audition if a reader is not to be present. Often due to budget constraints or size of the role, the CD may have to read and operate the camera at the same time and this is at the discretion on the CD. Best practice is that a separate camera operator will be engaged if a Casting Director is to be the reader where budget allows. A Performer may only bring their own reader to the audition if this has been agreed to in advance with the CD. In all other cases, the Casting Director will provide whatever is necessary for the Performer with regard to props, eyelines, prompts etc.

7. Readers and Casting Directors auditioning

(a) Best practice is that Readers will not audition for roles they are reading for. If the CD wants to include the Reader in their casting search then the Reader must put down their audition first and have no further input in casting the role other than reading.

(b) Casting Directors must not be in competition for a role they are casting, or have a conflict of interest in the project. If a Casting Director wishes to audition for a role they must step away from the casting process completely.

(c) The CD must not have any other financial interest in the casting of a particular Performer, other than the casting service they are contracted for.

8. Direction/Treatment of the Script

(a) The Performer will have an opportunity during the audition to discuss the role for which they are auditioning with the Casting Director.

(b) It is expected that the Performer has already studied all available information given about their character and/or script for which they are auditioning. The purpose of this discussion is to clarify any queries arising out of such study, or to establish, if there is one, a preferred approach to the role.

(c) The Performer may be asked to read for or improvise additional material if it is considered to be to the benefit of the audition. If improvisation is required the Performer will be advised at the time of booking wherever possible.

9. Intimacy

The following section that pertains to Casting has been drawn directly from the Equity NZ Intimacy Guidelines, full link [here](#):

INTIMACY GUIDELINES

For screen auditions, no nudity will be involved at any stage of the process. No kissing or simulated sexual activity will be involved in initial auditions. The only exception being where simulated sex comprises the entirety of the role.

Where audition scenes involve intimacy a non-contact action will be substituted. For example, to represent a kiss the convention is to lean in and turn heads away from each other.

In a recall, there may be a genuine need in limited situations for the audition to involve simulated sex, due to the specific requirements of the role. In such circumstances the following conditions will apply:

- The Casting Director will inform the Agent at the time of briefing of the extent of any nudity/simulated sex the role will require.
- The Casting Director or Producer will provide the Performer and/or their Agent with the audition script at least 72 hours in advance of the recall with the required nudity and/or simulated sex scene detailed and information on how the intimate content fits within the story as a whole so that a Performer can make a fully informed decision as to whether they are prepared to do that work.
- The auditioning of a scene involving simulated sexual activity should include a third party (such as an Intimacy Coordinator or responsible individual nominated by the Performer) who will be in attendance during the audition should the Performer require. This person will be specified in the audition brief.
- Where a Performer is required to audition in a simulated sex scene they will sign a form with the Casting Director or Producer that contains the following:
 - The Performer consents to audition in a simulated sex scene
 - The footage will only be shared with members of the decision-making team, and shared only in password-protected, non-downloadable form
 - Once the role has been cast, the Producer will ensure all footage involving simulated sex is deleted
 - In the event that the Performer does not receive a written undertaking from the Casting Director or Producer regarding use of the footage, an audition involving simulated sex will not be recorded.

The only people allowed to be present in the audition room are the Performer, Casting, Director, Producer, Reader and Support Person.

- Casting Directors, Producers and Directors should note that failure to take adequate steps to protect and dispose of such recordings may be a breach of the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 and New Zealand Privacy Law.

Where particular physical features are essential for a role, a body check may be required after a recall and before a role is confirmed, either with the Casting Director or the Producer/Director. The following conditions will apply:

- Only essential personnel will be present
- A Support Person of the Performer's choosing or an Intimacy Coordinator may be Present
- Modesty garments will be made available to the Performer

In no circumstances should a Performer be asked or required to send a self-tape involving nudity or simulated sexual activity.

In the event that revealing clothing specific to the character is required (for example, for a swimwear commercial), the Casting Director will note this in the audition brief.

A Performer is obliged, when asked, to disclose any tattoos, significant markings or physical features likely to be exposed during the performance or that may affect filming. A Performer may also be required to consult with the Production regarding body tattoos, significant markings or particular physical features for the purposes of makeup, wardrobe or filming.

10. Identification on Tape

The Performer will need to be identified on tape. The identification may be by graphics only, by name board or by verbal identification depending on the Producer/Director's brief to the Casting Director.

The Performer will also be required to answer any questions the Casting Director may be required to ask which are relevant to the role or brief. This may include but is not limited to questions regarding availability for shoot, call backs, special skills required for the role such as Te Reo. In some instances Performers may need to show their hands and teeth for close up requirements. These questions are dependent on the Producer/Director's brief to the Casting Director. For drama auditions, where possible, identification will be done at the end of the audition.

11. Audition Times and Lengths

(a) Casting Directors will provide a specified day and time for an audition and it is expected that an auditioning Performer will be on time for this audition and not be kept waiting unduly for their audition.

(b) The length of an audition will vary according to the size of the role and it is usually obvious from the script provided how long a Performer will need to allow for their audition time. In cases where a Casting Director knows that auditions will take longer than expected, they will inform the Actors Agent in advance so that the performer can make an informed decision about their availability for an audition. It is recognised that delays can sometimes occur, however a CD may not have the Performer wait for more than 1 hour for the initial audition, and will communicate with the Performer. If the Performer can't wait any longer the CD will reschedule their audition.

(c) The standard recall fee for TVCs is for no longer than one hour and an additional recall fee should be paid per hour after that.

(d) Costs of Performers attending a recall away from their home base will be agreed prior to any recall being finalised.

12. Self Tests

(a) If a Performer is offered an audition by a Casting Director but is unable to attend, the Performer may have the opportunity to provide, at their own expense, an audition on a format specified by the Casting Director, and to a deadline also specified by the Casting Director. This is to be referred to as a Self Test.

(b) As it is the Performer's choice to provide a Self Test at their expense, they retain the right to record their audition with or without assistance from other people (e.g. a friend, a professional camera operator, a Casting Director, in a studio, out of a studio etc) without discrimination by the Casting Director, and without the person engaged by the Performer to assist them being in any way responsible to anyone other than the Performer for the quality of and results of the Self Test. It is also recognised that a professional reader may not always be available to the Performer. Specific CD preferences for each casting will be outlined in each brief. Self tapes need not cost actors or agents any money. CDs accept all range of Self tapes as long as actor can be seen & heard within reason, shot on iphones, ipads, computers etc. Casting Directors do not look for technical perfection, the most important thing for them is an accessible performance that shows how the actor can inhabit the role.

(c) It is the Casting Director's discretion whether they will accept Self Tests for any given brief. There is not always enough time to get everyone in the room so it may be that a performer is invited to do a Self Tape instead, again at the discretion of the Casting Director. CDs guarantee they will watch every submission that has been approved.

(d) The Performer must upload the footage to a secure and non-public platform. If the CD is providing the upload system they must ensure this is secure and private.

(e) In addition to the audition being a Self Test, in these circumstances, should the Performer be cast in the role, they are considered to be resident in the city specified in the Casting Brief, unless otherwise negotiated by the Actors Agent before the audition takes place. See section 4

(f)

(f) The CD and production may also request a Zoom audition or callback if an audition in the room is not possible for safety or location reasons.

(g) A TVC self-test is counted as the first audition to avoid any doubt at recall time, at which point a recall fee is payable. However, in the rare circumstance a Performer does not follow the notes provided by the CD they may be required to Self Test again with no fee payable.

(h) Turnaround Times for Self Tests.

For TVCs, Casting Directors will aim for a 48 hour minimum turnaround, excluding weekends and public holidays, from issue of first scheduled media release. Agents and Performers will accept/decline audition offers as soon as possible after receiving them, so as not to disadvantage other actors who may be called if offer is declined.

For TV, Film and Streaming Services - Casting Directors will aim toward:

- For tests of 3 pages or less: a minimum 3 working-day turnaround;
- For scripts of 4-6 pages: a minimum 4 working-day turnaround;
- For tests of 7 pages or more a minimum 5 working-day turnaround;
- And for serial TV: a minimum 3 working-day turnaround

Weekends and public holidays are excluded. (i.e. if a brief for a TVC is given to an actor on a Friday afternoon, it will be submitted no earlier than the following Tuesday afternoon. In this example, if the Monday is a public holiday, the submission day would be Wednesday.)

In circumstances where it is not possible to comply with these provisions, it is up to all parties to work together to find a possible compromise. CDs are encouraged to provide more time whenever possible.

13. Performer's Declaration Form

(a) Where a cast form has been provided by the Casting Director for a Performer to fill out prior to entering the audition room, it is expected that all information given by the Performer is accurate and true, highlighting availability for the shoot and previous experience. The casting form may be in hard copy or digital form. The form will not be shared with any other parties other than the production. Hard copies will be destroyed after the completion of the project and any digital copies deleted or stored on a secure hard drive for internal reference only. It is recommended that CDs include a preferred pronoun section on the form.

(b) In the case of TVCs, it is essential that when asked Performers declare all previous TVC roles for the time frame specified in the cast form so that any potential conflicts of interest are immediately apparent.

(c) In the case of TVCs, and where deemed relevant to the role, the Performer may also be asked to declare any criminal convictions including driving offences and must do so honestly. The Declaration can be considered a legal document once signed. If a background check is required for a TVC this will be stated upfront at the brief stage. All completed forms will be

treated with the utmost privacy by Casting Directors and destroyed at the completion of the project. Information provided by the Ministry of Justice does not detail offences, only whether the Performer has passed or failed. If a Performer fails a background check, then they will be notified via the agent and at this point can decide if they would like to reply with an email within 24 hours. It is important they are given this opportunity before any final casting decisions are made.

(d) The Casting Director expects the Agent to notify them if there are any potential conflicts which arise after the audition has taken place, e.g. another role offer or hold has occurred.

(e) For some productions, especially TVCs, it is a legal requirement to know the Performer's age, especially in the case of Juveniles. However, the Performer needs only to put their date of birth, and not their age, on the casting form if it is requested.

(f) It is the performer's responsibility to state which recognised Agent they are represented by. If a performer is not represented by a recognised Agent and is independently contacted via other industry-accepted booking methods, i.e street casting or a personal recommendation, the performer will be asked to state their representation as independent. However if they are contacted independently and do have an agent, it is expected that agent will represent them and it will be their responsibility to contact their agent and inform them prior to the audition. Where a CD learns that an auditionee is represented by an Agent, they will let the agent know of the audition.

14. Notification of Results

(a) The Casting Director will advise the Agent of the results of the casting as soon as a decision has been made by production, unless the production contacts the Actors Agent directly. Where possible the Casting Director will let all relevant agents know that a script/role has been cast and whether a Performer from their agency has been cast or not in order for the Agents in turn to inform their Performers who auditioned. Where casting decisions are delayed for any reason, the Casting Director will continually update the Agent until finalised.

(b) The Casting Director will notify the Agent which Performer(s) have been added to a shortlist and/or recall list. The Performer is then considered to be on a hold/pinned for that role. This hold/pin excludes the possibility of the Performer being able to contract for any other conflicting role without following the procedures in (iii) and (iv) below.

(c) Where a conflict arises and a decision is still pending, a Performer may be placed on a second hold/pin for any other role offers. In such cases the Casting Director of the second hold/pin will be notified of the first hold/pin, and the Agent must also contact the Casting Director of the first hold/pin and inform them of the second hold/pin. This is so that all parties can make an informed decision.

(d) In the situation of the second hold/pin preceding the first hold/pin in becoming a firm offer, the Agent will inform the Casting Director of the first hold/pin in order to give them to time to

notify their client of the situation. Their client must either come back with a firm offer or release within a recommended 24 hours.

In the situation where their client has been informed of the situation, and cannot make a decision for whatever reason, then the second hold/pin can be confirmed ahead of the first hold/pin.

(e) Third and Fourth holds/pins operate in the same way as for first and second.

(f) A hold/pin is a good faith indication the actor is in the running for a role. Both a mutual courtesy and a professional necessity.

(g) The Agent will represent the Performer in all negotiations and under no circumstances will a Casting Director negotiate directly with a Performer or a Performer's guardian, unless they are not represented by an Agent.

PART C – ACCESS TO RECORDS AND AUDITION TAPES

15. Use of Screen Test

No recording of an audition or screen test shall be used in any manner other than for the private viewing of the Producer, Director, or their nominee. The Casting Director may not show the recorded audition to any other party without prior permission being granted by the Performer via their Agent. The Performer may not use the audition for anything other than the intended project without prior permission from the Casting Director and producers.

Casting Directors may request permission to use existing footage of Performers to recommend them to projects and to encourage productions to shoot in NZ. If agreed by Performer and Agent appropriate work may be shown in confidence. This excludes minors.

Once the project is in the public domain the Performer may use the audition as an example of their work.

If asked by Casting Directors if Agents had any old auditions of an actor on file, Agents would like to be able to provide these self-tests if agreed by the Performer.

16. Comments on Screen Test

All notes, comments and/or any records taken by the Casting Director of the Performer's audition shall not be disclosed to any person other than the Director and Producer for whom the audition was conducted. No third party shall be permitted access to such material unless cleared with actor and agent first.

PART C – FEES AND NEGOTIATIONS

17. Recall fees

Recall fees for TVCs will be paid where applicable. Recall fees for drama will be negotiated on a per job basis where applicable, for example an extended time commitment or travel to screen test.

18. Negotiations

Where the Casting Director is involved in negotiating the Performer's contract they shall ensure that the Agent is supplied with a copy of the relevant Producer's contract, or proposed contract/deal memo. Where possible CDs should ask Producers for an early indication of role size and communicate this to the agents on the brief. Eg line count and credit (Day player, Co Star etc). This transparency helps Performers and Agents make an informed decision about the commitment.

19. Changes to the Deal

It is understood that where fees and conditions have been outlined in a Casting Brief, these are agreed to by the Agent when submissions are made by them to the Casting Director. If there are to be any exceptions/negotiations regarding any particular Performer/s or conditions, the Actor's Agent must negotiate these in advance of an audition taking place. Fees may be negotiated retrospectively where the role increases significantly or where conditions are altered beyond the intent of the original brief given to the Actor's Agent, and this includes situations where the scripts provided do not accurately outline the size or significance of the Performer's role, or the usage of the production is changed, or any other significant changes.

PART D – JUVENILE PERFORMERS/SAFETY

20. Juvenile Performers

All Casting Directors, readers and associated crew working with children and young people must be vetted by police in line with the Screensafe Screen Industry Child Safety Guidelines below.

The following link provides information for the engagement of juvenile performers and their chaperones and are non-negotiable where they pertain to casting.

[JUVENILES](#)

21. Safety

For all Health and Safety guidelines in casting, including Pandemic protocols, Casting Directors must refer to the ScreenSafe website:

[SCREENSAFE](#)

PART E – OPERATING WITHIN THE BILL OF RIGHTS ACT 1990 & THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1993

21. The Casting Director will not discriminate against any Performer on any grounds including but not limited to age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, or reputation, providing the Performer has the attributes and skills appropriate for any given role, and a role may be defined by some of the above characteristics such as age, gender or ethnicity.

Where possible, performers with disabilities, people of colour, without reference to age or size, gender-diverse performers, and genders will be invited to audition for roles where race, ethnicity, gender, sex, age, culture, appearance or the presence or absence of a disability is not relevant to the role. Representation matters.

The Casting Director will do their best to make the audition room a comfortable and welcoming space for anyone auditioning, as well as providing accessibility to all Performers.