

Selecting and Preparing an Interview Panel

(For Hiring Managers)

Select Your Panel

When compared to interviewing by yourself, there are advantages to the panel interview format. Multiple interviewers hear the same information and have a common basis for comparison reactions and how well they believe the applicants match the requirements of the position. Feedback from multiple people increases the credibility of the process and can provide additional protection from discrimination claims. Disadvantages include scheduling everyone, the increased risk that someone may utter something inappropriate and an increase of tension for the applicant. Applicants tend to be more nervous in front of a group.

Remember that a crucial part of a successful interview process is presenting the agency in the best possible light. We want potential new employees to see that we are organized and singularly-focused on hiring quality individuals that can help us meet our goals and objectives. The applicant is watching to see how panelists get along with each other as an indication of the working environment in your department or section. Making a good and lasting impression directly contributes to securing and keeping quality employees.

When selecting members of the interview panel, keep the following tips in mind:

- Make sure all panel members are available to participate fully for duration of interviews. If someone knows in advance they will miss any part of the process, either reschedule or find a different panel member.
- Panel members may be composed of management staff, represented staff, community partners or OED partners.
- In general, an interview panel should not exceed five persons
- Your interview panel should be diverse in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and work experience. Just as important are picking panel members who understand the job in question, can objectively evaluate the applicants, can actively participate in the discussions and can maintain confidentiality.
- Explore potential conflict of interests once the applicant names are known.

Prepare Your Panel

A well-prepared panel factors significantly into a successful recruiting process. Your HRA is available to help develop this process or any of its components.

Before the Interview the following information should be prepared, placed in a folder, and shared with panel members before the interviews:

- Interview schedule and questions
- Position announcement
- Position description
- A list of the selection criteria
- A set of applications including the cover letter or resume if required
- Copy of *Interview Guidelines for Panel Members*
- Forms for the evaluation method if applicable

The day of the interview assemble panel members early - at least 60 minutes prior to first interview (45 minutes if they panel members have reviewed the selection criteria, the application materials, the position description and the Interview Guidelines for Panel Members in advance).

1. Explain objective of interview, and specifically the role or the “charge” to the panel. For example:
 - ❖ To recommend one final candidate; or
 - ❖ To recommend, in ranked order, three acceptable candidates; or
 - ❖ Just to discuss strengths and challenges of each candidate.Discuss the method for finalizing the recommendation. It is to develop a consensus, majority vote or something else?
2. Review and answer questions regarding information in folder.
3. Discuss the key job duties with the panel. Discuss how this position fits within the department and agency and how it contributes to the agency’s mission, values and goals.
4. Describe the ideal candidate. Discuss the selection criteria in enough detail so that the panel members have sufficient understanding of each, their priority and why each one is important.
5. Give the panel enough time to adequately review the application materials in advance so that they are not fumbling with papers throughout the interview. Remember, we want to present ourselves as organized, professional and attentive.
6. Discuss the interview format and the role of each panel member during the interview.
7. Discuss the evaluation method you wish to use. Forced ranking? Strengths and Challenges? A combination of both? Other?
8. Discuss specifically what confidentiality means in relation to their role on the panel.
9. Answer questions.