



Interview Tips

Thank you for helping us to select the most qualified candidate to fill this open position with the City of Madison. Whether you are new or seasoned in interviewing, please take a moment to review some interviewing best practices.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Review applications and resumes (if provided).



Review the position description to understand the duties and the needed knowledge, skills and abilities.



Allow time for the candidate to review the interview questions immediately prior to the interview.



Allow time for the panel to discuss the questions and benchmarks prior to the interviews.

THE INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

The Opening
(5% of the interview time)

- » Introduce the panel members. Be friendly. Always remember what it's like to be on the other side of the table.
- » Talk about the position and department briefly before starting to ask interview questions.

Information Gathering
(70-80% of the interview time)

- » Take thorough notes documenting the candidate's responses. Remember that your notes could be released in a lawsuit so do not make notes about any personal characteristics of the candidates.
- » One panel member should be in charge of watching the clock. Make sure each candidate gets the same amount of time.
- » Actively listen. This means concentrate on what the candidate is saying and not on the next question.
- » It is important to ask the question as written so that each candidate is receiving the same experience. Do not ask any new questions that are not part of the interview set.
- » Follow-up questions are okay. However, you must be consistent across candidates. Normally, follow-up questions are used to clarify acronyms or jargon that the candidate may be using or if the candidate did not answer part of the original question.

Information Giving
(10-20% of the interview time)

- » Be prepared to answer their questions on the essential functions of the job, the work environment, onboarding, why the position is vacant, and the timeline for hiring. A panel member may be designated to answer certain types of questions.
- » You should be prepared to answer questions about the starting salary. Refer specific questions related to benefits to Human Resources.
- » It is okay to say, "Let me get back to you," if you do not know the answer to a question.

Conclusion
(5% of the interview time)

- » Share the recruitment timeline. When will they hear about next steps?
- » Make sure one panel member collects the interview questions and notes from each candidate before they leave the room.

HIRING FOR "FIT"

What does it mean to hire the right fit?



What are the skills needed on the team? What are we missing that could make us perform better? These are the questions to ask and assess if someone is a "good fit." A good fit isn't someone who clicks well with or is similar to the team, or is someone you want to have lunch with, but rather is someone that brings new skills to the team that are lacking.

PANEL PARTICIPATION RESPONSIBILITIES

- » If a panel member personally knows the candidate being interviewed, they may recuse themselves if they feel they would not be able to objectively evaluate the candidate.
- » Candidates information and participation in a hiring process is **strictly confidential**, before, during and after the interview. Interview questions and benchmarks are also confidential.
- » Panel members are prohibited from using the internet to find out information about the candidates as the information obtained online may be unreliable, inaccurate, and/or lead to discrimination lawsuits.
- » Each panel member should take thorough notes documenting the candidate's responses. Avoid taking notes regarding physical characteristics of the candidate, such as, "older, blonde, funny laugh, etc." All notes are subject to discovery in case of a lawsuit and such notes could be used as evidence of discrimination.
- » Scoring the candidates should be done separately by each panel member following each interview.
- » Panel members should not discuss overall rankings with each other until all interviews are completed.
- » There should be a post-interview discussion. At the post-interview discussion, ask the external member to share their scores and thoughts first. If the hiring manager is on the panel, that person should participate last.

TYPES OF BIAS

BIAS

Why do we talk about bias? Bias, whether conscious or unconscious, has an effect on our judgement in an interview process. By understanding the types of bias, it will make us more aware of our own tendencies. We can then acknowledge when we are making a decision due to our bias and realize the need to re-evaluate.

| BIAS | DESCRIPTION |
|---|--|
| Halo Error | This is the tendency to let a global or overall impression or a single strong characteristic of the candidate influence all judgements about them. Ex: the candidate was particularly outgoing and friendly so the fact that they did not answer the questions as well as others is overlooked. |
| Intuition Error | This is the tendency to make a decision based on a "feeling" and is not as reliable than objective factors or evidence. Avoid making hiring decisions based on the fact that you have a "feeling" the person is a good fit. |
| Contrast Effect | This is the tendency to let the quality of other candidates influence the judgements about a present candidate under evaluation. Ex: None of the candidates were great, but the last candidate was better than the rest so let's hire that person. Having strong benchmarks and using them as the basis for your decision will help mitigate this bias. |
| First/Last Effect | This is the tendency to be overly influenced by information about the candidate that occurred very early or very late in the interview. Ex: the candidate seemed to be the one we were looking for but toward the end of the interview, he shared he was terminated from his previous employer, and that's all you remember. |
| Attractiveness Bias | This is the tendency to give more favorable scores to candidates who are physically attractive. This may also work to the opposite extreme. Ex: I can't have a candidate who is too attractive in this role as it will distract the team and hinder performance. |
| Assume Relationship Between Characteristics | This is the tendency to assume that if a candidate has characteristic "A," they must also have characteristic "B." Ex: the candidate went to an Ivy League University, therefore, they will be a strong hire. |
| Leniency/Severity and Central Tendency | Leniency/Severity is the tendency to be a "hard" or "easy" interviewer. This will result in consistently giving ratings that are higher or lower than warranted to all candidates. Central tendency is the rater that gives average or middle-of-the scale evaluations to all candidates. Again, having benchmarks helps mitigate these biases. |
| "Similar to Me" Error | This is the tendency that interviewers may give higher evaluations to candidates who are similar to themselves in terms of physical and/or psychological characteristics, (appearance, age, values, attitudes, etc.). Ex: this candidate is very positive and enthusiastic, much like myself, therefore, he will be a good hire. |
| Overemphasis on Unfavorable Information | This is the tendency to allow negative responses or factors to overpower positive responses or factors. Ex: the candidate is perfect in every way, but was terminated from a position 12 years ago. I won't hire anyone who was ever terminated from a position. |
| Making Early Decisions | Studies show that interviewers tend to make decisions within the first 5 minutes of an interview, regardless of what else happens in the interview. It is important to be an active listener during the entire interview and evaluate the candidate based on answers to all the questions in the interview. |

Thank you for your participation in the process! The City of Madison greatly appreciates your time and expertise.