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**Interview guide and alternative  
forms of candidate assessment**

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# Introduction

This guide provides leaders with information on:

* developing an inclusive interview structure
* alternative selection methods
* developing interview questions
* common interview questions in the not-for-profit sector
* interview rating system.

# Inclusion in the recruitment process

Applying inclusive practices to your recruitment process will help you to attract diverse candidates, because it shows your organisation’s commitment to building an inclusive workplace. While this guide focusses on inclusive interviewing, there are many steps managers/leaders can take to make the whole recruitment process more inclusive before the interviewing stage. Below are some things to consider to make your recruitment process more inclusive and increase your chances of attracting diverse candidates:

* Expand your outreach efforts to reach a more diverse pool of candidates when advertising positions – for example, utilise social media channels to advertise positions, work with disability employment services or various specialist recruitment agencies that target specific cohorts to attract candidates.
* Consider being a member or sponsor of diverse organisations or events so that your organisation has visibility within diverse groups.
* Share job advertisements personally with networks and contacts and invite applications from their own networks and contacts, emphasising the organisation’s to hire diverse candidates.
* Ensure your job advertisements stand out to a diverse range of candidates. Below are some ideas on how you can do this:
  + use respectful, gender-neutral language and avoid jargon. Make sure the job description can be understood by a wide audience
  + use an accessible format (learn more here: [Make your Word documents accessible to people with disabilities - Microsoft Support](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d))
  + consider offering alternative ways of application – for example, instead of submitting a cover letter, you could give candidates the option of submitting a video where they can speak about their experience
  + keep selection criteria to a minimum. Sometimes extensive selection criteria can deter candidates from applying for the role
  + consider whether the position you are hiring for requires formal qualifications. Making formal qualifications an “essential” criteria can exclude some candidates. Instead, you could define the skills and experience that are desired by the organisation
  + include a statement about your commitment to creating an inclusive environment where employee diversity is recognised and celebrated
  + outline your organisation’s mission and values, as many job seekers are motivated to apply for roles that align with their values
  + outline the benefits your organisation provides – for example, hybrid/flexible working arrangements, various leave provisions, etc.

# Developing an inclusive hiring process

Prior to embarking on interviews, recruiters can benefit from outlining their interview structure. The below steps are advised.

1. **Determine the job requirements**: before the recruitment process starts, make sure you have a clear understanding of the role you are hiring for. This includes understanding the job requirements, skills, and experience needed for the role. This is important as it will help you write a clear job advertisement that can be understood by a wide audience.
2. **Develop key competencies**: develop a list of key competencies that are essential for success in the role. This could include technical skills, communication skills, teamwork, problem solving and leadership.
3. **Create interview questions**: develop a list of interview questions that will help you assess the candidate's competencies. Be sure to include a mix of question types that are specific to the role and the company culture.
4. **Decide on the interview format**: this could include a one-on-one interview, a panel interview or a combination of both. You could also give candidates the option of having either a face-to-face interview or online interview. Decide on the order of interview questions, and who will ask each question. Be flexible with the format to cater for diverse needs.
5. **Have a diverse mix of interviewers on the panel**: this helps to increase diversity and inclusion in your organisation by maximising the impact on hiring decisions. Diverse interview panels will bring diverse perspectives and will help organisations think more broadly and inclusively about who they should bring into the organisation. It will also help the interview panel see past any unconscious biases. Having a diverse panel can help put candidates at ease during the interview. This may include inviting a representative from outside of your organisation to be a part of the panel.
6. **Consider different selection methods** to use in conjunction with the interview, or as an alternative to a formal interview. This will provide further opportunity for candidates to demonstrate skills/experience, as interviews alone may not bring out these skills, particularly for candidates who find interviews to be an intimidating experience. You should let the candidate know in advance what they will be required to do so they can adequately prepare. Some examples of different selection methods are outlined in [Alternative selection methods](#_Alternative_selection_methods) and include:

* giving the candidate a task to complete that is related to the job they are applying for
* practical assessments
* roving interviews
* work samples
* hypothetical questions/scenarios

1. **Develop a rating system**: develop a rating system to help you evaluate candidates. This may either be numbered or as simple as marking each answer as effective, neutral or ineffective. Having a consistent rating system will ensure panellists can compare thoughts at the end with an evidence base to ground decisions.
2. **Consider the space where you conduct the interview**: check with the candidate ahead of time as to whether they require any accommodations to be made. For example, holding the interview in a space that is accessible for a person who uses a wheelchair.
3. **Schedule interviews**: schedule interviews with the candidates and provide them with all the necessary details, including the date, time, location, who they will be meeting with and overall format of the interview.
4. **Provide the candidate with the interview questions ahead of time**. This will help all candidates feel better prepared and give them a fair chance to put their best foot forward. This demonstrates a commitment to inclusion and shows that your organisation is empathetic and transparent.
5. **Conduct the interviews**: interviews can be a daunting process for many candidates, so engaging in informal conversation before you commence the interview is a good way to help candidates feel more comfortable and at ease. Conduct the interviews according to the framework you've developed. Use the rating system to evaluate each candidate's performance and take detailed notes throughout the interview process.
6. **Evaluate candidates**: after all the interviews have been completed, evaluate each candidate based on their performance during the interview/selection process. Use the rating system to compare and rank the candidates against the profile and criteria of the role.
7. **Make a hiring decision**: make a hiring decision based on the evaluation of each candidate. Be sure to communicate the decision to all candidates in a timely and respectful manner.

# Alternative selection methods

## Practical Assessment

Hiring managers can design a practical, technical (or other) assessment aligned to the role to assess for technical skills and/or aptitude. This could either replace or add on to the job interview. Asking candidates to solve work-related problems or partake in a practical test can yield important insights. A skill test forces employers to critique the quality of a candidate’s work versus unconsciously judging them based on appearance, gender, age or personality.

This is a simulated work task that assesses a candidate’s capability to perform the inherent requirements or technical skills required for the role. Consider the strengths which are important for the role, for example, attention to detail, ability to spot errors, ability to perform repetitive tasks etc.

Tasks can be a written assessment, a presentation, a practical demonstration, a “project”, or a challenge the candidates can work on at the interview. It is recommended to provide the project details in advance to the candidate and have them present their project/challenge outcomes to the interviewers.

If there is an oral presentation, the assessor can also provide alternatives to a standard oral presentation such as offering candidates the opportunity to pre-record their presentation or submit a written summary.

The task should produce an output that can measure their capacity and capabilities.

## Roving Interview

Instead of the interview taking place in a neutral environment, consider a ”roving” interview around the actual work site with the hiring manager, where the candidate can experience the working environment.

This highly inclusive method is less intimidating for the candidate and will give the candidate some insights about the actual workplace, as well as the opportunity to meet current employees. Note that it is more challenging for the hiring manager to keep a structure and take notes.

## Work Samples

Work samples are tangible evidence of a candidate's skills and abilities, which are often requested during the recruitment process for various not-for-profit roles. These samples can include written documents, such as reports or proposals, design work, social media campaigns, or other relevant examples of previous work. Work samples offer employers a glimpse into a candidate's abilities and allow them to evaluate the candidate's fit for the role. For candidates who may find the interview process more challenging, this provides a great opportunity for showcasing talent outside of an interview.

Work samples may be pieces of work the candidate has previously completed in another role, or you may request a fresh task which is provided by you. Examples of these include:

* event brief
* funding proposal
* project plan
* program delivery outline
* fundraising campaign plan
* evaluation plan
* a short article
* short policy submission or analysis
* budget analysis
* portfolio of marketing materials, such as social media posts, newsletters or media releases

This is an opportunity for you to see if the candidate understands the work they will be doing in the role and for you to see the quality of their work, rather than just how well they answer questions during an interview.

# Developing interview questions

An easy approach to developing behavioural questions assessing either a specific competency or personal characteristics is to first think of the skill you want to assess, and then frame a question so that it elicits an example of (relevant) past behaviour. For example, if you wish to know about the candidate's presentation skills a traditional question would be "this role requires you to present a lot of information sessions - what are your skills in this area?". However, a behavioral equivalent would be "tell me about the last presentation you gave". Your follow-up questions may include such things as; "who was your audience?"; "who else was involved?"; "how did you prepare?"; "how did you measure the success of the presentation?" etc. Attempt to create a natural conversation with the candidate as this will support them to feel at ease and put their best answers forward.

To assess the candidate’s answers fairly, you may consider writing down key actions before the interview that demonstrate the specific competency, skill or behaviour required for the role. It is also recommended that you ask several different types of questions to assess one competency. Be flexible and make the interview as conversational as possible and not a “question / answer” interview.

Be sparing with your use of ”closed” questions, which are questions that offer a finite number of responses. Instead, choose “open” questions so candidates can provide unrestrained or free responses. Open questions will encourage a more free flowing conversation and, importantly, will help reduce bias caused by presumption, or leading on behalf of the interviewer.

Below, you will find two examples of competencies that are generally required for most roles – teamwork and motivation. This will give you an idea of how you can develop interview questions that match the key actions of both competencies. You might like to try doing this with other competencies that relate to the position your organisation is hiring for.

**Example: Teamwork**

Key actions:

* open, honest and courteous in dealing with colleagues and readily offers information and assistance where necessary
* listens to the views and opinions of colleagues
* appreciates team goals, understands the work of immediate colleagues and is able and willing to cover for them when necessary
* shares knowledge and experience with other team members
* promotes a culture of collaboration and teamwork across organisational boundaries
* promotes the cross-fertilisation of team capabilities throughout the organisation
* makes personal sacrifices to ensure the success of others
* promotes and builds team continuity and cohesiveness
* shares wins and successes
* actively encourages a supportive team culture.
* encourages the free exchange of information and ideas.
* encourages open, honest, constructive feedback.
* performs own team duties responsibly and effectively.

Interview question examples:

Q1. Tell me about one of your favourite experiences working with a team and the contributions you made.

Q2. Tell me about a time when other members of your team disagreed with your ideas. What did you do? What was the outcome?

Q3. Tell about a time in which you were a member (not a leader) of a team and a conflict arose within the team. How did you handle the situation?

Q4. How do you get your voice heard in a team?

**Example: Motivation**

Key actions:

* interests align with role
* self-awareness
* recognises own motivators and de-motivators
* self-motivated.

Interview question examples:

Q1. What are three things that are most important to you in a job?

Q2. What motivates you? What do you find demotivating?

Q3. How do you motivate yourself to persist with a job even if you may not achieve your targets or objectives?

Q4. Please give me an example of something you achieved whilst working on your own. What was the outcome, and in hindsight is there anything you would do differently?

Q5. What would make you choose to work at \*organisation name\* over others?

# Common sample interview questions

A sample of some common interview questions that may assist recruiters are listed below. These questions are suitable to use when recruiting for a variety of roles in the not-for-profit sector, and you can tailor these questions to suit your organisation and the role you are hiring for.

1. What attracted you to work for \*organisation name\* and particularly this position?
2. What skills and expertise would you bring to the position to ensure you will be successful and add value to \*organisation name\*?
3. This role will involve engagement with several stakeholders both within the organisation and outside the organisation. What do you think are the key ingredients in guiding and managing successful working relationships with stakeholders?
4. Please describe how you manage projects including meeting deadlines and competing priorities.
5. What elements of the position do you think would be a challenge for you? [this question will help to identify areas the candidate may require training or development in if hired].
6. Please describe a time when you were asked to do something you had never done before in your role. How did you react and what did you learn?
7. Please describe a time when something significant did not go according to plan at work. How did you approach the situation and what was the outcome?
8. Can you give an example of a positive outcome a client had as a result of you working with them? What was the process to achieving this outcome?
9. How do you achieve work-life balance?

# Rating the interview

Keeping interview notes and interview guide records is essential for fairness and equity. It also means that you do not have to rely on your memory when assessing a full day of interviews.

Having a template for making notes during an interview ensures that all interviewers have some consistency in the things they are making note of.

By rating each answer, you can use the ratings to assist you in your overall assessment summary and comments at the end of the interview guide. Always complete this assessment before you conduct the next interview and discuss and agree on an assessment from the interview team’s perspective.

You should write any comments and concerns on the guide while they are in your mind as they will prove invaluable, and enhance your memory, when you conduct your reference checks.

# Conducting the interview

On the day, ensure the interviewing panel is familiar with the chosen interview process and have all the information they need. This includes key documents such as the candidate’s resume, cover letter, work samples and interview questions. Ensure the panel have had some time to discuss their approach. This may mean they agree on which questions they will each ask and how they might address different scenarios.

Supporting candidates to feel at ease may seem like common sense, but it is worthwhile considering if there is anything else they may need so that you can get the best version of them during the interview. This might include:

* asking if the candidate needs any additional support for the interview (when the interview is initially organised)
* offering water or a cup of tea/coffee upon arrival
* introducing yourself and other panellists before getting started on the questions
* asking the candidate if they have any questions for you, the interviewer.

# Sample Interview Template

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Position: |  |
| Name of applicant: |  |
| Date of interview: |  |
| Name of interviewer: |  |
| Question 1 - Insert Question, e.g. “Please tell me about a situation… | |
| Notes: | |
| Score  1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Question 2 - Insert Question, e.g. “Please tell me about a situation… | |
| Notes: | |
| Score  1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Question 3 - Insert Question, e.g. “Please tell me about a situation… | |
| Notes: | |
| Score  1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Question 4 - Insert Question, e.g. “Please tell me about a situation… | |
| Notes: | |
| Score  1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Question 5 - Insert Question, e.g. “Please tell me about a situation… | |
| Notes: | |
| Score  1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Total score /25 | |
| Make note of any administrative questions you may need to ask and insert here    Eg:  □ COVID19 Vaccination  □ Police check  □ Drivers license  Possible commencement date - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |