



The Interview Process: Quick Tips for Hiring Managers ✓

Hiring great employees is key to building a great organization, and it is one of your most important responsibilities as a Montgomery County Government (MCG) manager. This document is designed to help you quickly navigate the interview selection process for a new staff member in your agency or department. Feel free to use it as a checklist to help guide you through the various stages involved in preparing for and conducting interviews.

Before the Interview

1. Identify Candidates for the Interviews

- Review the class specification, position description and the job announcement.
- Identify the most important Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) and other criteria needed to perform the job.
- Review the resume for each candidate on the Eligible List.
- Review the Hiring Manager Report.
- Based on a review of the KSAs and preferred criteria, select candidates to interview.
- Document the job-related criteria used to identify individuals chosen for the interview.

2. Select Interview Panel Members

- Select Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and/or individuals who are knowledgeable of the position.
- You may utilize employees from other department/agency with requisite subject matter knowledge.
- Select an odd number for the Interview Panel (we recommend a total of three or five Panel Members).
- Panel Members should be diverse (gender, race/ethnicity, age).
- Panel Members should be the same grade or higher than the position being interviewed.

3. Develop Interview Questions and Evaluation Criteria

- For your interviews, develop behavioral-based questions that:
 - Center around the concept that the best predictor of a candidate's future performance is his or her past performance in similar circumstances.
 - Focus on specific incidents that detail what the interviewee did, said, felt or thought in past workplace experiences — not hypothetical situations. For example, the interviewer should ask the candidate to describe **what they have actually done** rather than what they would do in a specific situation.
- Questions should target competencies that are critical for the position.
- Along with questions, draft benchmarks or response standards; this will ensure that the interview evaluation can be measured fairly and objectively, based on pre-determined standards.
- Avoid asking questions about why someone wants the job or what his or her career goals are.

3. Develop Interview Questions and Evaluation Criteria (continued)

- Identify how many questions will be based on competencies and the total number of questions.
- Ensure all candidates will be asked the same group of questions during the interview.
- Determine if there will be one or two rounds of interviews; a different set of questions should be asked for the second round of interviews. Additionally, consider whether you, as Hiring Manager, want to be the Panel Chair or would prefer to delegate that responsibility to another Panel Member.
- Ask open-ended questions that allow candidates to provide descriptive information rather than just “yes” or “no” answers.
- Draft questions and preferred responses.
- Select either the three- or five-level evaluation scale for the Interview Panel Members to assess each candidate’s responses. For definitions of the two scales, see page 31 of the *Selection Guidelines*. For samples of the two types of Selection Panel Individual Evaluation Forms as well as the corresponding Selection Panel Consensus Evaluation Forms, refer to the *Selection Guidelines Forms*. All of the materials are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HR > Workforce > Recruitment > Selection Process.
- Select and document the job competencies for the position. For an explanation of job competencies, refer to pages 17 and 18 of the Selection Guidelines (see link above).

4. Prepare for the Interviews

- Determine the length of the interview; each candidate must be allotted the same time (for example, 45 minutes).
- Decide if you will provide candidates with the interview questions prior to the interview; if so, decide on how much time will be allotted. (We recommend no more than 15 minutes, but be sure to consider the complexity of the job.)
- Develop a schedule and allotted times for each candidate being interviewed:
 - If candidates are reviewing questions prior to the interview, make sure the interview schedule reflects this.
 - Ensure the question review time for applicants is monitored.
 - Ensure consistency with all applicants reviewing questions in advance.
- Prepare a packet for each Interview Panel Member that includes:
 - Interview Panel Disclaimer Form (available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HR > Workforce > Recruitment > Selection Process)
 - Job announcement
 - Complete interview schedule
 - Candidates’ resumes
 - Interview questions without benchmarks to be used during the interview
 - Interview questions with benchmarks to be used during the interview evaluation
 - Selection Panel Individual Evaluation Forms
- Prepare briefing notes for the Panel Chair to welcome each candidate:
 - Give an overview of the interview process.
 - Tell each candidate about the job and the organization.
 - Tell each candidate about the reporting structure and work location.
- Include the explanation of job competencies (see end of section 3 for online location).
- Have copies of the Selection Panel Consensus Evaluation Form to complete at the conclusion of all interviews.

During the Interview

IMPORTANT: If you, the Hiring Manager, will be the Panel Chair, then you will need to handle the responsibilities in sections 5 and 6 below. If you do not plan on assuming the role of Panel Chair, then it is your responsibility to review the following two sections with the Panel Chair.

5. The Interview Panel Chair's Role and Responsibilities

- Ensure that space is adequate and free of distraction.
- Advise applicants of how much time is allotted and be cognizant of the length of interview.
- Candidates should be provided with a copy of the interview questions **during** the interview (if not also for a designated time period prior to the interview; see Section 4). This will allow candidates to follow along while the questions are being asked.
- Introduce the Panel Members; members may provide business cards if desired.
- Provide an overview of the interview process to the candidate.
 - Explain that this is a structured interview process.
 - Rotate questions among interview Panel Members.
- Based on the briefing notes, tell the candidate about the job, organization, reporting structure and work location.
- Close the interview:
 - Optional: Discuss benefits and salary range
 - Allow candidate the opportunity to ask questions. (These are not scored)
 - Outline the next steps for the candidate.
 - **Collect the interview questions from the candidate.**

6. The Interview Panel Members' Roles and Responsibilities

- Arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled interview.
- Review the job announcement, resumes, and interview questions.
- Complete the Interview Panel Disclaimer Form.
- Only ask the assigned questions; however, you may seek clarification (without leading or introducing a new line of questioning) and/or request candidates to elaborate on their responses to ensure you understand their responses.
- Defer all MCG-specific questions to the Hiring Manager or the Office of Human Resources HR Specialist.
- Document each candidate's responses to the interview questions.
- Evaluate and complete an individual candidate rating form.
- Discuss the interviews with other Panel Members to determine a final candidate rating and recommendation.
- When evaluating responses, compare applicant responses to the pre-determined benchmark and not to other candidates. This will ensure consistency in scoring. Also, be cognizant of bias and be careful to evaluate candidates objectively.
- Panel Chair/Hiring Manager should collect all materials from the panel and maintain records for a minimum of one year.

Questions? If you have questions about the interview process, please contact your department's Recruiter (HR Specialist).

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