

# Selecting the Right Person for the Job

A Guide for Conducting Interviews



### Planning the Interview

*Most classified job vacancies are filled by individuals who have earned a rank on an employment eligibility list. Placement on a list is determined by candidates' performance on an employment selection process designed to assess the level of job related skills that are essential for success in the job classification as a whole. Your role is to assess the extent that the candidates possess the job related skills needed to succeed in your particular position.*

*As the hiring authority, you should inform the Classified Employment Services Branch (CESB) of your need to fill a vacant position. An Assignment Technician from CESB will send you a list of the eligible candidates who are available to be considered for your particular vacancy.*

### Preparing to Conduct the Interview

#### Refresh your knowledge of the job duties of the position

The most recent class descriptions for all classified jobs are available on the Personnel Commission's website. Visit us at [www.lausd.net](http://www.lausd.net) and click on "Employment" then "Classified" and then "Classified Job Descriptions".

A class description provides a general overview of the most essential and typical duties performed in the classification as well as the essential skill set needed to perform those duties.

#### Identify essentials of vacant position

Once you have reviewed the class description, list the specific duties of the vacant position and determine the knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits needed to perform those duties. Consider how the position fits in to the organizational design and objectives of your school or office. This outline together with an organization chart depicting how jobs are interrelated within the work unit, will serve as a valuable tool to use in reaching your hiring decisions and can also provide beneficial information for the candidates.

#### Draft job-related Interview Questions

Questions should cover important aspects related to the duties assigned to the job, specifically the most essential skills you have identified. Questions should be devised to determine whether there is a good fit between the candidate and the job as well between the candidate and your school or office. They should also be worded in a way that encourages a candidate to elaborate on his/her experience and background.

#### Determine standards which differentiate between successful and unsuccessful job performance

Ideal "standards" or "benchmarks" against which candidates should be evaluated serve as a guide in comparing one candidate to the other. These standards should be specific and measurable. That is, they should describe the extent to which each skill is needed to successfully perform the duties assigned to the position. For example, you may need to determine how proficient a candidate is with technology - does she or he have only basic computer skills? Does she or he know how to use MS Word? Or, is she or he proficient in a variety of software programs such as MS Word, Excel, Access, and Power Point? Those candidates whose experience, training, skills, and abilities most closely match the standards set forth for successful job performance will most likely be the most qualified candidates for the vacant position.



#### Gather candidate background information

Prior to the interview, it is advisable to request that each candidate bring a resume or a copy of their application and any other documentation that might provide information about his/her background and overall qualifications for the job. Copies of a candidate's applications can also be requested from the CESB.

The application, resume, and other background material serve as a means to familiarize yourself with the candidate's employment and educational history. As you examine the materials, consider background and experience listed which is relevant to your specific position.



# Interviewing and the Law

*You must have a legitimate business reason to pose any question in an employment selection interview. To ensure this, only ask questions that directly relate to the duties of the job and skills required to successfully perform those duties.*

## Equal Employment Opportunity

The District is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Civil rights laws and other employment laws govern the employment rights of individuals and must be followed. Laws governing public employment and District policy make it illegal to ask about, discuss, or consider any of the topics listed below. They are not job related and do not predict success.

- age.
- family size/age of family members.
- marital status.
- pregnancy.
- religion or creed and related acts or opinions.
- race, color, ethnicity, national origin or ancestry.
- medical condition or potential disability.
- affiliations, political acts, or opinions perceived to closely associate an individual with a protected characteristic.
- gender or sexual orientation.
- financial status.

Prior to publishing an eligibility list, information relating to individual employment suitability, such as pending legal actions and convictions, health issues, military service issues, and the right to work are evaluated. If necessary, candidates are disqualified prior to the establishment of the list. Therefore, it is inappropriate and nonproductive during the selection interview to inquire about whether the candidate

- is a citizen of the United States.
- was discharged from the Military and what his/her status was when discharged.
- has been arrested or convicted of any crimes.

If a candidate begins to discuss any of these areas, advise him/her that those areas are reviewed at a later time, so you do not need to consider this information in your hiring decision. Then, redirect the discussion to a more job related area.

## Develop your interview questions

Your interview questions should be designed to:

- elicit specific examples of job related behavior (e.g., In this position you will have to... Tell us about any similar experience you might have had.) The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.
- be behaviorally based rather than hypothetical. Avoid questions that start out with: "What would you do if... As candidates often respond with what they think you want to hear rather than providing you with an accurate response. A more productive approach is "Tell me about a time that you were required to..."
- focus on the competencies necessary to perform the essential duties of the job and only one competency per question (e.g., "Tell me about a situation during which you provided exemplary customer service.")
- be open-ended rather than closed-ended. Questions that provide the candidate with the opportunity to respond with specifics rather than with a "yes" or a "no" are effective (e.g., "Tell me about your experience with computers" rather than, "Do you have computer experience?")

## Decide who will conduct the interviews

Once your questions are prepared and all of the background information necessary to proceed is available, decide who is most qualified to conduct the interviews.

- If you select to use a panel, the rule of thumb is that it should be comprised of at least two people but less than four. The larger the panel, the more nervous you make the candidates.
- hiring authorities and/or staff or service receivers who are knowledgeable about the specific position should be part of the panel.

Whether a person or a panel interview, they should:

- understand the most important skills being measured in the interview.
- understand and agree on how the interviews will be conducted.

## Conducting the Interview

### Build rapport with the candidate

Most candidates are nervous when they first arrive for an interview. Consequently, encourage them to put their "best foot forward". Create a positive environment during the interview. Positive rapport with a candidate is encouraged during the interview by:

- having an understanding of the most important skills being measured in the interview.
- shaking hands and greeting the candidate at the beginning of the interview.

- reviewing what will be covered during the meeting.
- smiling and maintaining eye contact with the candidate.
- incorporating pleasantries as appropriate.
- nodding your head to exhibit your understanding and to encourage the candidate to offer more information during the interview.
- showing interest during the interview (e.g. leaning forward).

## Effective questions

An interview is a discussion designed to elicit information that is predictive of the extent that a candidate can and will perform the duties of the position. An interview should have the tone of a conversation, not an interrogation.

- Use standards/benchmarks to determine if a candidate's answers to questions provide you with the information you need to adequately evaluate the extent they possess a specific skill. Probe/ask follow-up questions to obtain the information you need to make an informed decision (e.g., Can you be more specific..., Please tell us a little more about..., What exactly do you mean by...) Begin by asking general questions and continue with more specific questions.
- Ask questions to clarify points made by the candidate and to help you effectively evaluate the candidate's qualifications.
- During the interview, determine the extent that the job duties listed on the candidate's application and/or resume coincide with those she/he orally describes.
- Question the candidate about discrepancies that appear on these documents (e.g., conflicting employment dates).
- Inquire about gaps in employment as well as specific reasons for terminating previous employment.

Describe the job for the candidate and answer her/his questions so that if an offer of employment is made, the candidate is assured that the job is one in which they would in fact be interested. Ensuring that candidates have a realistic preview of the position and making expectations clear lessens the incidence of turnover.

## 80/20 Rule

Because a typical interview lasts less than 30 minutes, make the most of the limited interview time by giving the candidate ample opportunity to describe his/her qualifications for the job. Aim to speak only about 20% of the time, leaving 80% of the time for the candidate to provide the information you need during your meeting.

## Ineffective questions

During the interview, avoid asking:

- more than one question at a time. This can confuse candidates and increase nervousness.
- leading questions that indicate the answer sought.
- "multiple choice" questions in which several responses are offered by the interviewer rather than allowing the candidate to respond freely.

## Control the interview

As the interviewer, your role is to guide the interview. Tactfully take control of the meeting from the beginning by explaining to the candidate what will be discussed during the meeting and the amount of time you have made available for the meeting. If, during

# Considering the Disabled Candidate

*Both United States and California law prohibits employers from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in all areas of employment. An individual is considered to have a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. Major life activities include walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, concentrating, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks and being substantially limited in working (in a broad range of jobs).*

Some points to remember:

- A qualified individual with a disability is someone who, with or without a reasonable accommodation, can satisfactorily perform the 'essential functions' or core duties of a position.
- A reasonable accommodation is an effective adjustment made by an employer to accommodate known physical or mental limitations, provided that such accommodation does not impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's program.
- When conducting interviews, it is discriminatory to make/voice assumptions about the limitations a disability imposes on an individual. It is a good idea in a hiring interview to ask an individual with a disability how she or he would perform essential job duties and then determine if these methods can be implemented with regard to the position for which she or he is interviewing.



***With minimal effort, a highly qualified individual who happens to have a disability can become a very productive employee.***

the interview, you find that the candidate is not providing you with the information you desire, redirect the line of questioning, ask follow-up questions, or make additional inquiries in areas needing further explanation. Let the candidate know that you need additional information.

## Avoid common pitfalls

To avoid reaching the wrong decision, don't:

- reach premature decisions. Wait until the end of the interview when you have gathered all pertinent information before evaluating each candidate.
- allow your evaluation to be unduly affected by the strength or weakness of the previously interviewed candidate's performance. (This is referred to as a "contrast error".)
- create a strong expectancy based on information gathered prior to meeting with the candidate (such as information gathered from the application).
- allow your own positive or negative biases and prejudices to cloud your evaluations.
- focus only on negative or positive behavior displayed by the candidate.

The best way to avoid these pitfalls is to focus on comparing the background and skills of the candidates you interview with the standards or benchmarks of successful job performance you defined prior to the interviews.

## Reaching a Hiring Decision

### Compare and discuss

Once you have considered the qualifications of all of the candidates you have interviewed, compare and contrast candidates. Reach a decision to hire the candidate who can best fulfill the needs of your specific vacancy by only focusing on job related factors. Evaluate candidates against the benchmarks that were deemed most important prior to the interviews.

### Decide on backup candidates

In addition to choosing your top candidate, choose one or two backup candidates. This is necessary because there is no guarantee that your top candidate will accept your offer. Additionally, they may have already accepted an offer from another school or office. Also, after conducting reference checks you may find that your top candidate is not the best fit for your vacancy.

### Conduct reference checks

Before a firm offer of employment has been made, it is essential that you contact current and previous supervisors to solicit additional information about the candidate(s) you are considering. The Talent Acquisition & Selection Branch attempts to collect generic reference information for any person considered for initial employment with the District; however, you may be able to collect more detailed, specific information as you personally contact current references. At a minimum, when conducting your reference checks, ask current and previous employers if they would rehire the person and to describe this person's attendance record.

## Select and hire

When a final hiring decision has been reached, ask your Assignment Technician at the CESB to make a formal offer of employment to your top candidate. The CESB will help you complete the steps needed to make the job placement legal and official.

As a courtesy, after your employment offer has been accepted, please inform the other candidates you interviewed of the outcome and thank them for meeting with you. Whether you do it by phone or email, this is an important step to ensure that candidates leave your school or office with a professional image — leaving candidates wondering about your decision without follow up leaves a bad impression.

## The First Day on the Job

The first day on the job is difficult for any new hire. You can help ease the transition by:

- thanking the person for accepting your job offer.
- introducing the new hire to staff members.
- ensuring that the employee's work station is ready
- explaining work rules and policies.
- accompanying or assuring that someone on the staff accompanies the employee to lunch.
- encouraging the person to know you genuinely want them to succeed!

## *Taking notes during the interview:*

### Do...

- take brief notes as you interview a candidate to help you remember what the candidate said. Good note taking helps to effectively compare candidates at the end of the interview process.

### Don't...

- let your note taking keep you from maintaining eye contact with the candidate. The candidate needs to be assured that you are listening and comprehend.





# Talent Acquisition & Selection Branch *Personnel Commission*

visit us at [www.lausdjobs.org](http://www.lausdjobs.org)

