Interview Guidelines & Questions

This guidance might help with the interview process. Please keep in consideration:

- Ask less complex, broader questions at the onset to establish a comfortable environment.
- Questions that do not directly affect the job shouldn't be asked and may be considered illegal (e.g., Are you married? What year did you graduate from high school?)
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recommends that employers avoid asking questions about applicants about personal characteristics that are protected by law, such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin or age.
- It is better to ask a question about previous experience than a hypothetical one (e.g., When you were at XYZ Company, how did you handle… vs. What would you do if…)
- Detailed follow up questions will most often give you specific information that you can use in your decision making.
- If you have a "gut feeling", find a way to ask a question about what is unanswered or is bothering you.
- If you aren't sure whether you should ask a question, i.e., it might be illegal or inappropriate, don't!
- Planning your questions in advance will help you keep a consistent framework for all your candidates. It will ensure you are getting information that will relate to the job description.
- Don't hesitate to ask different and specific follow up questions based on the candidates' responses; these will likely differ with each interview.
- Try to be aware of any biases you might have that could affect the interview, e.g., the person comes from another country, they are of a certain age, etc.
- If you aren't clear about a candidate's response, ask for clarification.
- Ensure you are uninterrupted during the interview.

The following are suggestions for questions that may help you with your interview; they don't all need to be asked. Other questions may certainly be used. If you don't find these questions work for you, feel free to substitute others.

Introductory Questions:
- How did you learn about this job opportunity?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Tell me a little bit about yourself.
- What interests you about this position?
- What are you hoping to find here that perhaps you haven't had in other positions?
- What are your 3 best skills? What are 3 opportunities for improvement you have?

Overall Work Questions:
- Tell me about a major work success you've had.
- Tell me about a work mistake you've made.
- How do you keep organized and manage priorities?
- Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond to get the job done.
- What are your short- and long-term goals?
- What do you believe are major challenges and opportunities in this position?
- Tell me about a time when you had a difference with a co-worker and how you handled it?
- Tell me about a time when you had a difference of opinion with your supervisor and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time when you reached out for additional responsibility.
- When you look back at previous jobs, tell me about something you are particularly proud of.
- Tell me about a time when you were creative.
- What kinds of people irritate you and how do you handle them?
- Define good communication.
- How do you get cooperation from someone in another department?
- Describe a time when "office politics" affected your job
- Tell me about a time when you collaborated to accomplish a task.
- What kind of decisions are the most difficult for you to make?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision.

Technical Questions:
- You may ask questions relating to specific technical requirements.
- Be sure they are job relevant.
- You may ask the candidate to interpret data (explain a balance sheet for a finance position) or perform a work related task (compose and keyboard a letter to a patron for an administrative role).

Concluding:
- If you joined our organization, how long do you think you would stay?
- What should we know about you that we haven't asked about or discussed?
- Why should we hire you for this position?
- What questions do you have for me?