Tips for Interview Teams

Prior to the interview, the hiring manager needs to determine whether to use one interviewer at a time or a group of interviewers simultaneously. If an interview panel is used, a group of three to five individuals would be an ideal group size. The following are suggestions for team interviews.

- Applicants should be informed ahead of time that the interview panel approach is being used as it can be stressful seeing more than one interviewer in the room.
- Every member of the interview team should be knowledgeable about the areas to be evaluated — A qualified person in the occupational area under consideration should be present in the interview.
- Someone who has firsthand knowledge of the organization's working culture should be included in the interview team.
- Ensure that each interview team member is trained in effective interviewing techniques (e.g., behavioral) and briefed in advance regarding their role in the meeting. Ideally, meet together as a team 10 minutes before the start of each interview to brief for the specific candidate. Take this time to review the candidate's resume, application, and the position requirements to be questioned during the interview; assign appropriate questions to be used, and assign each panel member which questions he/she will use to lead the discussions.
- One person should be chosen to lead in each team interview. The rest of the questions should be assigned beforehand to the other members of the interview team. Again, all candidates should be asked the same questions.
- Make the setting comfortable – not too expansive or too constrictive. Forming a soft arc (without a table) in front of the candidate is less structured and more conducive to productive exchange.
- Mutual respect for everyone present is essential for effective interviewing. The applicant will assume that the relationship demonstrated between team members is typical of relationships between and among organizational employees.
- Listen, and listen carefully. You have an advantage of "extra ears" to pick up on key details and nuances from the candidate. Every panel member should be taking notes but also staying engaged in the discussions taking place.
- Allow the candidate enough time at the end of the interview (at least 10 minutes) to ask questions to the panel and possibly provide additional qualification information not previously covered.
- Have a prepared closing statement (see facilitator role below) as a professional way to end the interview—including a realistic expectation for the follow-up schedule. The candidate will always want to know.
- Be prepared to convey to the applicant the benefits/advantages of working for your department.
- Don't forget to thank the candidate for his or her interest and time—remember that the candidate is an invited guest.