

Creating an Interview Guide

Public Service Commission

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A good interview guide consists of the following:

- Introductory remarks
- Interview questions aligned to competency/KSA requirements
- Clearly documented expected and acceptable responses for each question
- Closing remarks and benefits summary
- Rating Scale

Introductory remarks

The introductory remarks are intended to do the following:

- Introduce interview panel members;
- Provide a brief overview of the position; and
- Explain the process.

Interview questions

- Must be based on, and aligned with, and must directly assess the “bring” competencies identified for the position;
- May be organized under the heading of each competency and/or group of related competencies (e.g. skill and corresponding attributes);
- Can be a mix of behavioural, situational and direct knowledge-based questions, focusing on job-related knowledge, skills/abilities and applicants’ past experience;
- May assess several competencies in the same question, particularly if using behavioural descriptive interviewing (BDI) question;
- Should have clearly documented expected and acceptable (although not necessarily comprehensive) responses. Candidate responses can then be objectively evaluated to determine if they meet the competency requirements at the level required for the job;
- Should avoid conflicting with the provisions of the [Saskatchewan Human Rights Code](#);
- Should avoid the use of acronyms, jargon, or ambiguous or informal language;
- Should be at the right level of comprehension for the job, not more complex;
- Templates have been created to assist in the development of your specific interview guide. Click link to view:
 - Out-of-Scope Interview Guide Template
 - In-scope Interview Guide Template
 - Relatively Equal Interview Guide Template
- Guide should be between 15 and 20 questions in length, for a one-hour interview, depending on the kind of questions you are asking.

Types of Interview Questions

□ Direct/Knowledge Based Questions

- Best for assessing candidates' job-related knowledge or technical expertise
- Uses a simple question/answer format
- Identify the expected response in order to evaluate candidate responses against those expectations.

- **Example:**

Competency Statement: *Knowledge of population health promotion theory and practice.*

Question: *Describe key elements of a population health promotion approach.*

Expected Response:

- *Addresses determinants of health*
- *Focuses on populations versus individuals*
- *Involves community in meaningful participation*
- *Works upstream to address the root causes*

□ Behavioural Descriptive Interview Questions (BDI)

- Are used to assess competencies and predict candidate's future behaviour based on their past behavior and to determine organizational and/or role fit.
- Ask the candidate to provide real life examples of their own experiences to show whether or not they have the competency at the level required for the position.
- Have a specific format: situation, behaviour, and outcome. *"This is what you would do in this job (situation). Give me an example of a time when you had to do the same kind of thing and provide details of that (behavior), including what the result was (outcome)."*

Example:

Competency Statement: *Ability to persuade, influence and motivate by articulating the implications of a proposed policy, program, legislative direction or change.*

Question: *In this job, you'll need to work with industry to ensure that compliance with changes to XYZ policy. Describe for us your most recent experience in working with stakeholders in a similar initiative.*

- *What was the subject matter? What was your objective?*
- *What was your role and who else was involved?*
- *What strategies or steps did you take?*
- *What tools/processes did you use?*
- *What was the outcome? Was it successful?*
- *Would you do anything different next time?*
- *Who can verify this example?*

- Describes what happens in the job which sets the context, and then asks for the candidate’s most recent experience or best example, or an example of something that did not work as planned, etc., to direct their thinking to a specific example or situation they have experienced.
 - Include several follow-up or prompting questions that don’t necessarily have to all be asked or answered individually, as long as they are covered off. Typically, by asking the main question, a candidate will “tell the story” and that will include most of those other areas. If they don’t, you can follow up more specifically with one or more prompts.
 - Should include a “learnings” question asking what, if anything, they might do differently next time. Sometimes, their answer is about something that didn’t work out so well, but they learned from it, which may be just as important.
 - Ask who can verify the example, essentially like asking for a reference, especially if the person involved in this situation might not necessarily be someone on their list. It might be important to follow up with someone to confirm the details and their role in it.
 - Tend to have longer responses and candidates often have to spend a few minutes thinking about the situation. It may be appropriate for them to come a bit early for the interview to be given these BDI questions in advance, so they can think about it, jot down some notes and refer to them later in the interview. There is no requirement to do this but it may be appropriate, depending on the level of the job and the number of BDI questions. (If you do this, ask for the questions back afterwards.) *Provide link here.*
 - Often when asked about a specific example, a candidate will answer what they *would* do in that situation, rather than what they have *actually done* in that situation. In that case, redirect them to provide an actual example of a time they faced that situation. If they have the competency, they should be able to provide an example of how they demonstrated it.
- **Situational Questions**
- Hypothetical questions used to determine how applicant would handle a given scenario.
 - Similar to a BDI but instead of asking “Tell me about a time”, it asks “What would you do if...”, with a specific scenario.
 - Best used where it is highly unlikely that a candidate has experienced the scenario and therefore would be unable to give an actual example in response to a BDI question or to show how the candidate might think or plan something through.
- Example:**
- Competency Statement:** Demonstrated ability to guide and coach a diverse group of employees, that results in a team that can meet its goals and

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objectives, while maintaining a healthy, productive, respectful and safe work environment.

Question: If you were hired into this manager position, and on the first day, several employees came to your office to tell you this was a dysfunctional team and that you'd better take control right off the bat, what would you do?

- Keep in mind that, with situational questions, candidates can just tell you what you want to hear, not what they have actually done.

Closing Remarks – on last page of Interview Guide template

- Explain **reference check process** and ascertain that list of references is appropriate;
- Explain **Criminal Record Check Policy** and that candidate may be contacted
- Review **salary range** – For external candidates, ask about salary expectations
- Probation** – identify length of probationary period (for permanent full-time, permanent part-time, permanent labour service)
- Benefits** – For external candidates, review appropriate list of [benefits](#) (SGEU, CUPE or Out-of-Scope)
- Timeframe** – when candidate can expect to hear back, and anticipated start date
- Candidate **questions**

Rating Scale

- For in-service SGEU candidates, level 1 through 10 (non-supervisors) (with seniority) - Pass/Fail basis
- For all candidates (in-service or out-of-service), level 10 (supervisors) and all level 11-14 – Merit basis (rating of 1-6)
- For out-of-service candidates (with no seniority) – Merit basis (rating of 1-6)