

Tips for Virtual Interviewing for Hiring Managers

Talent, Public Service Commission

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Currently in the Government of Saskatchewan, there are two commonly used options for interviewing a candidate virtually; by phone or via MS Teams. Your choice should be based on which option you are familiar and comfortable with and which option is accessible to your candidate. If you are not familiar with MS Teams, ensure you test it and become familiar with the technology prior to using it to interview your candidate(s). Instructions can be found on [Taskroom](#).

To set up your interviews:

1. Connect with each candidate directly to determine their access to MS Teams or phone, and use the technology that is appropriate. Once you have determined with the candidate the interview method, confirm contact information for each candidate and provide them with a number where they can reach you in case of technology problems or other issues/questions.
2. Use the Interview Invitation correspondence template in Taleo to invite the candidate to the interview. This correspondence contains important information about the position such as the advertisement and competencies, and can be edited to include additional details described below about the virtual interview.
3. Send out a follow up e-mail confirming the method of the interview. Include the link to the MS Teams call or the number that you will be calling to reach the candidate. Include your contact information in this e-mail as well in case the candidate needs to connect with you. Ask the candidate to provide their references to you by e-mail prior to the interview.
4. If you are using Behavioral Descriptive Interviewing (BDI) questions, it may be appropriate to e-mail the BDI questions to the candidate approximately 15 to 20 minutes prior to the interview, so they can think about their answers, jot down some notes, and refer to them later in the interview. If you will be doing so, notify the candidate at what time to expect this e-mail.
5. Have a discussion with panel members in advance, so all are aware of their role. For information on the role of the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union (SGEU) Panel Representative, including specific arrangements for virtual interviews, please review the [SGEU Panel Rep Guide for Managers](#).
6. Ensure that your SGEU Panel Representative is aware of the interview method so they can also be set up appropriately to avoid any confusion or disruption in the interview process. Provide them your contact information, as well, in case of technology issues. You can discuss the interview method and planned format during screening, or by e-mailing the Panel Representative directly.
7. Allow for some extra time between each interview in case there are technology issues that slow the process.
8. E-mail out any exercises or other assessment tools that need to be completed prior to the interview with clear instructions. Include the deadline, where to return it and a contact number for questions.
9. If you notified the candidate to expect the BDI questions in advance, per point number 4 above, ensure you send the e-mail at the time you indicated. You may wish to call them to confirm receipt, in order to avoid delays during the interview.

During the interview:

- Introduce the staffing panel so the candidate is aware of who is in attendance. Explain the role of everyone on the panel.
- Clearly describe the overall format of the interview/assessment process.

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- If the BDI questions were e-mailed to the candidate in advance, confirm they were received. If they were not received, you may need to problem-solve with the candidate, which may include e-mailing them again and calling the candidate back in 15-20 minutes to commence the actual interview.
- Explain the process for any additional assessments beyond the interview. If you are having candidates complete an exercise, let them know when it will be e-mailed, the expectations on time to complete it, and where to send their response.
- Clearly explain the format of the formal interview (i.e. explain who will be asking questions, explain that the panel will be taking notes so there may be moments of silence, explain that should the candidate desire the panel can repeat or rephrase a question, etc.)
- Read your questions clearly and, if possible, avoid long multi-part questions as they may be more challenging to respond to by phone or video. If necessary, ask all parts of the question at once so the candidate can hear its entirety and then ask segment by segment and have the candidate respond in that manner.
- If interviewing by phone, ask the candidate to provide a cue for when they have completed their response. Without eye contact it is difficult to know when the candidate is ready to move on. Have them say “that’s all” or “next question” as examples so the interview proceeds without any long delays.
- At the end of the interview, clearly re-explain next steps to the candidate.

Additional Virtual Interviewing Considerations:

- When interviewing via MS Teams, similar principles apply to interviewing in person. The environment the candidate is seeing should be appropriate, you should be mindful of body language and be clear in your communication. Be professional and set a comfortable tone for the candidate so they are best positioned to respond to your questions.
- If using MS Teams, get a contact phone number from the candidate at the start of the interview in case technology fails and you need to finish the interview by phone.
- Ensure the space you are interviewing from is quiet and free from distractions and background noise.
- Test your technology prior to your interviews so you can be sure that you are prepared.
- Ensure lighting allows the candidate to see you (i.e. too dark or no lighting directly behind you that shadows your face).
- If using MS Teams, try to have your computer connected with an Ethernet cable instead of Wi-Fi to assist in maintaining a consistent connection. Close all non-essential applications on your computer so you are not distracted.
- When asking questions via MS Teams, look at the camera to mimic eye contact.
- Advise candidates that you may be looking away from the camera to make notes but that you are still listening.
- If interviewing by phone, advise candidates what is happening in periods of silence, for example, if you are taking time to write notes. Also, take the time to explain who is talking before posing a question.
- Allow a period of time at the end for any candidate questions.
- Thank your candidate for participating in the interview and, if applicable, prepare them for the next stage of assessment (i.e. written assessment).
- After the interview is over, be certain that you have disconnected the candidate from the call/meeting prior to discussing your evaluation of their interview. If a Panel Rep was in attendance at the interview, ensure they have remained so that they may attend the evaluation discussion.