

Practical guide to interviewing

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The aim of the interview is to enable candidates to demonstrate their capabilities, knowledge and experience, drawing on past experience.

In this guide you will find practical information to help you with preparation (before the interview), during the interview and debriefing (after the interview).

Preparation

Preparing for interviews will help you to run a smooth process that gives candidates the opportunity to perform at their best. Preparation includes:

- **choosing assessors**
- **having a set of interview questions**
- having an interview response and scoring sheet
- deciding the **interview format**
- preparing for any **workplace adjustments** for people with disability
- preparing information for assessors and candidates

Assessors should also familiarise themselves with the role description, job ad, applications, the work done by the team and how this role fits in.

Before the interview

Making time to discuss the process with the other assessors before the interview will help the process run smoothly. Some things to discuss are:

- length of interview
- who will receive and introduce candidates
- who will ask which questions
- the rating scale
- any adjustments to be made for candidates with disability.

Depending on the role, you may want to provide a copy of the interview questions to candidates when they arrive for the interview and allow 5-10 minutes of reading time. This can help candidates to gather their thoughts and provide more structured, considered responses.

Opening the interview

A well prepared introduction to the interview will help put candidates at ease and make it clear what is expected of them. This may include:

- introducing assessors
- giving a brief overview of the role and organisation
- explaining how the interview will be run (e.g. timing, number and style of questions, that you will be taking notes, opportunity to ask questions at the end)
- tips for interviewees (e.g. suggest using a structure for their responses such as STAR – Situation, Task, Action, Result or SAO – Situation, Action, Outcome)

During the interview

During the interview, try to:

- maintain a conversational flow to allow the candidate to be at ease
- let candidate do the talking
- use probing questions when you feel that you don't have enough information
- actively listen to all answers

- take notes so you have a record of what was said
- be objective
- confine your questions to the role requirements.

When asking capability-related questions, you are looking for the candidate to:

- describe how they have effectively handled a situation at an appropriate level of complexity
- give you enough detail to see the depth and breadth of the capability you are assessing
- show their capabilities are directly relevant or transferrable to the role you are filling.

Probing questions

Use probing questions to dig deeper when candidates do not provide enough information or give general responses.

Examples of probing questions include:

- “Could you tell me more about that...?”
- “Are you able to provide a specific example?”
- “What was your thinking behind...?”
- “What was your role – what did you do...?”

When probing, avoid using leading questions (which point candidates towards the desired answer) or closed questions (which prompt a yes/no answer).

Leading or closed question	Replacement question
Did you develop a project plan?	What strategies did you rely on to deliver the project?
Did you get a result?	What was the outcome?

Take notes

It is important to take thorough notes during the interview as it is difficult to accurately assess a candidate based on sparse notes and memory. Alternate between making eye contact and taking notes so candidates feel like you are listening to what they are saying. Another option when you have multiple assessors is for one assessor to take notes while the other maintains eye contact, alternating each question.

Where possible, write down what a candidate said or did rather than interpreting or providing your own impressions. For example, note that a candidate looked down for most of the interview rather than saying they had poor eye contact.

Keep your notes after the interviews to assist with the records of selection decisions and to provide a basis for feedback to candidates.

Privacy considerations

When taking notes you should be aware of a candidate's right to seek access to information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 following their participation in a recruitment process with a NSW government agency.

For more information refer to the Information and Privacy Commission's [Fact Sheet – Applying for Government Recruitment Information](#).

Closing the interview

It is a good idea to ask candidates if they have any questions for you. Remember that the interview process is also about candidates deciding if this opportunity is the right fit for them.

At the end of the interview you can let candidates know about next steps (any further assessments, referee checks, screening checks and when they should expect to hear from you).

Debriefing (after the interview)

When assessing responses to behavioural interview questions, you are looking for evidence relating to the capabilities, knowledge and experience.

To assess questions with a different focus, such as motivation questions, you should use the requirements you developed when designing the question. This may include attributes such as having values and ethics that align with public sector values and ethics, showing passion for working in a particular field (e.g. social services), being interested in supporting and developing team members as part of managerial responsibilities.

It is a good idea for each assessor to rate the responses separately before conferring with the other assessor/s. Discussion can then focus on areas of discrepancy.

Allow time after each interview to write a brief summary of how the candidate's responses demonstrated the capabilities being assessed or highlight any areas requiring development.

Remember that the interview is just one of a number of assessments and should not be treated as the only factor in making your selection decision. See: [Consolidating results and make selection decisions](#) for more information.

Resources

- Australian Network on Disability – [Interviewing people with disability](#)
- Australian Human Rights Commission – [Questions in job interviews](#)
- Job Access – [Interviewing people with disability](#)