Structured Interview Examination Guide

INTRODUCTION

Chatham County is committed to ensuring the administration and implementation of all human resources policies, practices and programs are fair and equitable without unlawful discrimination, harassment or retaliation on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, age (40 or older), political affiliation, genetic information, or disability, except where age, sex, or physical requirements constitute bona fide occupational qualifications. Equal opportunity covers all employees and applicants for employment. Equal opportunity also covers all personnel and employment programs as well as management practices and decisions. Per Article IV, Section 2 of the Chatham County Personnel Policy, all department heads and/or hiring managers shall develop, use, and document on a consistent, routine basis, a selection process that best suits the county's needs to fill positions within their agency or department. In support of our commitment to this equal opportunity (EEO) principle, the Human Resources and Risk Management Department has designed this packet to provide a brief overview of a structured oral board interview and its process.

Thank you for serving as a member of the interview panel for Chatham County.

INTERVIEW PANEL COMPOSITION

An interview panel consists of two or more persons (raters) that have knowledge and familiarity with the job duties, field of work and/or profession closely related to the position we are interviewing for. County employees, community members and/or private sector representatives may be included to create variety and objectivity within the rater panel. If any member of your panel is a non-employee, please notify Human Resources immediately.

By request, the Human Resources and Risk Department will screen the applicant pool and reduced its size to a qualified and manageable group by separating the applications into tiered folders. You, along with the other raters, will make a more definitive evaluation of the candidates.

The Human Resources Technician will send a link to the hiring manager on the ad when the job closes, and all applications have been processed. If you would like access for the additional panel members, please let him/her know ahead of time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Due to the personal and confidential nature of the examination process, you should not discuss the interview questions or the results of the interviews with anyone. All applications, notes, ratings, specific comments, and information elicited during the interview are confidential and are not generally released to the applicant. In cases of appeal, generalizations of the overall evaluations may be released to the applicant upon formal request.

ORIENTATION

Prior to the interviews, the hiring manager will conduct a brief orientation. The review will include the use of the structured interview rating form, job description and other pertinent information.

Interview panel members (raters) function as a relaxed, informal team during the interviewing process.

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Chatham County uses interviews that follow a set, structured pattern. Increased reliability and validity are gained by concentrating on objective "job-related" questions rather than subjective variables. Listed is a brief outline of the typical interview process.

1.   The hiring manager introduces candidate to the interview panel and explains the qualifications for the job as well as the employment process.

2.   Interview panel questions the candidate using the provided set of structured questions. All interview questions are to be based on job requirements and must be standardized for each position.

3.   Follow-up questions are asked to clarify an answer or to search for more detail linked to the main questions.

4.   Each applicant is individually rated question by question and then given an overall score.

5.   At the conclusion of all interviews, the interview panel members (raters) compare their ratings of the applicants and make any necessary revision if <u>significant</u> discrepancies exist.

The focus of the structured interview is the objective assessment of candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities. Later, the job/department interview may examine how a candidate's vocational situation fits with specific job needs.

POTENTIAL RATER ERRORS

In rating candidates during the interview process, <u>raters must constantly be aware of a number of potential errors which commonly exist.</u> In any situation where one person evaluates another, there is a tendency to unconsciously commit one of the following errors:

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Halo Effect
Leniency Effect
Central Tendency Effect
Similar-to-Me Effect
Contrast Effect
First Impression Effect
Stereotype Effect

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<u>Halo Effect</u> is the tendency to allow a candidate's response to one question greatly influence the rating on all the other questions, even when there is little evidence for such ratings on the other questions. It is imperative that raters diligently try to keep questions as distinct as possible. For example, a candidate may show a great deal of effective oral communication skills, but this does not necessarily imply an equal amount of decision-making ability or leadership. Some of the questions are closely related, of course, and skill in one area often goes with skill in another. Nevertheless, careful attention to the amount of actual behavior justifying a rating will help avoid the halo effect.

Similar-to-Me Effect is related to the halo effect. Some candidates will remind you of your own approach to situations and it is tempting to award high ratings even when the candidate did not earn them. Remember these things: 1) you are not being evaluated; 2) the candidate is not you; and 3) this approach may not be effective or appropriate for the vacancy at hand.

First Impression Effect is closely related to the halo effect. Sometimes a candidate does very well right at the beginning of an interview and then quickly "bombs out." The rater observing this individual may become so impressed with the early responses that high ratings are given on poor responses.

Leniency Effect is the tendency to give people either the benefit of the doubt, or to be an "easy" rater. It is sometimes more comforting to be generous than it is to make an objective, but lower rating. The opposite tendency is to give too severe of ratings because of either an unusually harsh standard or failure to observe the candidate's behavior accurately.

Central Tendency Effect is a desire to "play it safe" or avoid giving extreme ratings. Sometimes people fail to assign a "1" or a "5" on the assumption that "nobody could be that bad or good." However, it is still important to make distinctions among candidates and the full use of the rating scale is the more reliable way of achieving this.

Contrast Effect is the tendency to rate two candidates much father apart because of the contrast between them. An average person can look extremely good or extremely poor in contrast to a very "low" or very "high" person. Keep in mind that you are rating the actual amount of behavior observed relative to ideal behavior.

Stereotype Effect can be a very difficult error to avoid since it can involve closely held and sometimes unconscious values. At times ratings are assigned because they "fit" with the ratings associated with the stereotype, not because of observed behavior. Stereotypes also affect the observation of candidates. Behavior that "fits" is seen and noted and that which does not fit either does not register or is consciously ignored.

All of these errors are common, and we all commit them from time to time. The important thing is to be alert to their presence.

SPECIAL INTERVIEW SITUATIONS

Occasionally, an interview panel may be confronted with special circumstances or an applicant with extremely unusual behavior such as: being excessively nervous or upset, "frozen" or excessively quiet, voluble, or incessantly talkative, domineering, combative or intoxicated by alcohol or drugs.

Your first concern is to help the applicant relax. The hiring manager may suggest that the applicant may wish to step outside for a drink of water or to take a walk. If the person accepts, the hiring manager should explain that if the applicant does not return that her or his absence will be treated as a withdrawal. In any case, each candidate must be given a complete interview if the candidate can participate in the interview process.

In situations where an applicant is so domineering, combative, or overly talkative, the hiring manager should stop the interview if necessary, and reorient the applicant to the interview questions. While each candidate is entitled to a full hearing, he/she has no right to abuse this privilege to the extent that the composure or convenience of other applicants and the panel are

unduly jeopardized. The applicant can continue to present new and important information, but within reasonable limits. When repetition of misconduct occurs, it may be necessary for the hiring manager to insist that the candidate complete the interview in a prompt manner.

In some cases, you may know an applicant who is scheduled to appear before the interview panel. During the orientation session, bring this matter to the attention of the hiring manager. If you feel that you can fairly and objectively evaluate your acquaintance's qualifications for the position at hand, then you should remain a rater for that interview. Prior to the interview, the hiring manager will also brief the applicant about your presence on the oral board and re-affirm your commitment to a fair evaluation.

CONCLUSION

Your volunteering to help Chatham County is crucial to the success of the interviewing and selection process. We hope this guide has been helpful, and if you have any other questions, please contact the Human Resources Representative handling the recruitment. ***Thank you!***