

Handbook Highlight from the Montana Municipal Officials Handbook

3.2 Interviewing and Checking References

3.201 Interviewing Candidates

At the very heart of the ability to conduct an effective job interview, is a thorough knowledge of the job duties, skills, experience and aptitude that are necessary to do the job well. The cost of a poor hiring decision is more than lost time and money. A poor hiring decision can cause a drop in morale, decreased productivity and poor customer service.

Types of interviews:

- 1. Performance Interview.** This type of interview has an individual perform a specific task related to the job she/he is applying for.
- 2. Behavioral Interview.** This type of interview is based on the idea that past performance is the best indicator of future behavior, and uses questions that probe specific past behaviors.
- 3. Structured Interview.** This type of interview is very straightforward. The interviewer uses a set of standard questions that are asked of all candidates.
- 4. Unstructured Interview.** This type of interview is more open. Questions are asked about the applicant's interests, educational background, previous work experience or other job- related subjects.
- 5. Telephone Interview.** This type of interview is used to narrow down the applicant pool based on essential criteria such as work experience, education, or required skills.
- 6. Technical Interview.** This type of interview uses technical questions, which are designed to measure applicant's analytic or problem-solving skills.

3.202 Preparing for the Interview

The typical steps to prepare for conducting an interview include the following:

1. Review the job description and extract 6-10 major tasks of the job. From these major tasks, identify the most important qualifications for the position and then determine how the municipality will measure those qualifications through the interviewing process.

(Refer to sample rating scales for interviewing later in this section).

2. Consider questions that elicit the following: motivation, related job experience, team player, ability to learn, technical skills, attitude, availability, flexibility, communication skills, customer service skills, and cooperation.

3. Identify who will be conducting the interviews (an individual or a committee) and prepare a list of questions to ask each interviewee. These questions should be relate directly to the job description. Develop a scoring matrix to rate candidates based on their responses to the list of questions. Make sure that the municipality is not asking illegal or discriminatory questions.

4. Prior to the interview, identify any problems or unique requirements with the position and develop screening tools to address these concerns. If certain aspects of the job are causing turn-over, mention them during the interview. It is better to have a person turn down the position with an accurate picture of what the position requires, than to have someone start and then quit.