

INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

The interview is an opportunity for you to learn more about the candidate's experience, skills, abilities, interests and assess their overall fit to the job. It's also an opportunity for the candidate to decide if they can see themselves thriving with your business!

Give thought to and plan for the accessibility needs of diverse applicants. People who use a wheelchair for mobility, people with hearing or vision impairments, people who can be anxious during interviews, or those with diverse cognitive abilities may require an accommodation during the interview process.

When you know in advance that a person may be uncomfortable or won't do well with structured interviews, a conversational approach in an informal setting can help candidates to open up. Helping candidates to relax allows for a more genuine conversation and an opportunity for people to connect in a more authentic way.

Types of Interviews

There are different types of interviews that can serve different purposes:

**TELEPHONE
OR ONLINE
INTERVIEWS**

**IN-PERSON
INTERVIEWS**

**WORKING
INTERVIEWS
AND WORK
TRIALS**



Inclusion Tip *Interview Adjustments*

Adjustments during the interview process could include holding the interview in a quiet space if the person gets overwhelmed by noise, or a wheelchair accessible location if the applicant uses a wheelchair for mobility, understanding communication options for a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, or a job coach for support if the candidate has diverse cognitive abilities.



Working Interviews

Working interviews can be very effective at determining whether a candidate can do or learn task-oriented jobs. This approach is especially useful when considering candidates with diverse cognitive abilities, people who are non-verbal or for people whose anxiety gets in the way of communicating well in a structured interview setting. It's also a chance for the individual to learn more about the opportunity by experiencing the tasks first-hand. A **show, do, review** approach works best, where:

- The candidate is *shown* how to do a task (for example, facing a shelf)
- Has an opportunity to *do* the task and (after being shown how to do it)
- Strengths are *reviewed* on how well the candidate could perform the task

When working with an employment service provider, WCB is usually covered through their employment programs, which reduces the liability if someone is injured on your premises. Job Coaches in these programs can provide tips, suggestions and checklists to the employer on how to best explain or demonstrate tasks in ways that the candidate learns best.

For longer work trials, where someone is brought on for a day or more, the candidate would need to be paid and covered under the company's WCB plan to reduce liability.

To determine whether the working interview should be paid or unpaid, consider these general guidelines and review WCB regulations to confirm

Is the candidate performing the actual job duties? If yes,
PAID

Are you using this as a less than two hour test as part of your hiring process? If yes,
UNPAID

Are you offering this as a trial period of work (a day, week, etc.)? If yes,
PAID



Inclusion Tip **Communicating**

Some people who are deaf or hard of hearing rely on lip-reading, but not all. Use alternative ways of communicating by asking in advance what works best for the individual. Some people communicate through sign-language, so booking an Interpreter is an option. Others communicate well by written communication, so offering an opportunity for the applicant to complete their interview questions on computer or writing back and forth works well.



What Can you Ask in an Interview (and What Can't you)?

Questions should always relate to the requirements of the job. Stay away from questions that are irrelevant, invasive or illegal. Some employers don't base interview questions entirely on exploring previous work experience or academic achievements, but more on shared life experiences to identify people with potential, rather than to eliminate candidates. If you are planning a casual, informal interview, communicate this in advance so the candidate is more at ease and knows what to expect.

If an applicant has a disability, you cannot ask them for a diagnosis, the status of their health, nor the cost of accommodations, if required. Unless the applicant brings it up, staying away from personal questions regarding the nature of disability is recommended. You can, however, ask job-related questions, or if they require any adjustment or accommodation to do their best work in the position.

Preparing an interview guide in advance of the interview will help to ensure consistency of the approach and that relevant questions are asked of each applicant.

Pitfalls to Avoid

- **BASING YOUR HIRING DECISION ON A FIRST IMPRESSION** It is natural to have a strong first impression. When interviewing an applicant, it's important to set aside your first impression and consider the applicant's overall potential.
- **JUDGING COMMUNICATION** It can be difficult to judge communication when a person is nervous, anxious or when someone is from an Indigenous or cultural background where silence is valued and respectful. Interviews can be daunting, and people will likely open up more once hired.
- **ASKING IRRELEVANT QUESTIONS** Make the best use of the allotted interview time by asking questions that are directly relevant to the work that the successful applicant will be responsible for.
- **KNOW WHETHER TO USE OPEN ENDED OR CLOSED ENDED QUESTIONS** Open-ended interview questions prompt discussion and provide more details to decide whether there's a good match. Closed-ended questions (ones that require a yes or no answer) work well for people with diverse cognitive abilities and others who may not do well with structured interview questions.
- **FORGETTING WHAT THE APPLICANT SAID** Take notes. Trying to remember who said what between multiple applicants is almost impossible. Recording responses allows for record keeping, whether the applicant is declined or hired. Ensure that written comments are only in reference to the candidate's ability to do the job.





Employer Case Study: Zero Ceiling

At Zero Ceiling in Whistler, British Columbia, a social enterprise committed to reducing youth homelessness and raising the quality of life for young people experiencing homelessness from Vancouver through the Sea to Sky Corridor, interviews are a casual thing. But that doesn't mean that they don't take them seriously and prepare in advance.

*They **rarely do traditional behavioural-based interviews and prefer to take an informal approach.** Sean Easton, co-Executive Director, prepares their employment program candidates in advance by letting them know that it will be more of a conversation than an interview and that they should dress casually.*

*It's important to Sean right from the start to set the tone as friendly so that each candidate feels comfortable. And **the interview is not just about assessing the suitability of the candidate; it's also about the candidate interviewing them to ensure that the program and experience is a fit for them, too.** To ensure a positive experience right until the end of the process, Sean also provides constructive feedback should someone not be selected to join the program.*

***Building relationships,** spreading a message of "unconditional love" to youth who've had many doors closed to them in their young lives is what Zero Ceiling is all about, from start to finish.*



Inclusion Tip **Personality Assessments**

People who are highly detail-oriented can get overwhelmed and stuck when presented with too many choices. When you know in advance a candidate has diverse cognitive abilities, including autism, or lower levels of literacy, it's a reasonable adjustment to by-pass personality assessments and rely more on the interview to determine whether the candidate is a good match to the job.

ASSESSMENTS AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT CHECKS

Assessments

Depending on the position, candidates may be required to complete assessments or testing in advance of hire. Testing may include typing speed and accuracy for administrative positions, math skills for positions that handle cash transactions or testing coding skills for programming.

Some employers use online psychometric tests to assess personality types in line with what is required for the position, to help choose the right candidate by better understanding personality traits, cognitive abilities and behavioural style. However, this may unintentionally exclude a huge part of the talent market. People with low literacy, autism or diverse cognitive abilities will have difficulty completing these assessments because of the abstract nature of how questions are asked.

Most employers only need to confirm previous work experience. Positions that require a high degree of trust, such as working at a bank or school or for any job that works with vulnerable people (children, the elderly or people with disabilities) may require a credit or criminal record check. This is for the protection of the people served through the business.

Before conducting a pre-employment check on an applicant, an employer should:

- Include this in the position posting
- Obtain the applicant's consent
- Explain to the applicant why specific checks are required and ask if there are any red flags that might come up
- Keep the information obtained from a background check confidential, regardless of whether the applicant is hired

Reference Checks

Conducting reference checks confirms work experience provided by an applicant. This can also provide examples of relevant behaviour—positive or otherwise—in the applicant's work history and identify additional training needs should that person be hired.

Reference checks are typically conducted over the phone or via email by either the hiring manager or a member of the Human Resources team who is experienced with conducting reference checks and familiar with the job requirements. Responses should be recorded, preferably in a reference check form and stored securely to maintain confidentiality and in accordance with privacy legislation.

Pre-employment Check Conducting pre-employment or background checks can be an important part of the selection process and includes:

REFERENCES

CREDIT
REPORTS

CRIMINAL
RECORD
VERIFICATION

DRUG TESTING
for safety sensitive
positions

EDUCATION/
CERTIFICATION





Inclusion Tip

Disclosing Hardships

Providing an applicant with an opportunity to self-disclose any financial hardships or previous criminal charges in advance of conducting these checks can provide a chance for the employer to understand situations surrounding these events and make an informed decision.

Appropriate References (Referees)

Provide applicants with an understanding of the type of person who should be used as a reference and the information that will be collected. An ideal reference will:

- Have worked with the applicant recently and observed their performance in the job
- Be a former supervisor in either a paid or volunteer position, or a colleague or client who worked closely with the applicant
- Be able to provide constructive comments regarding the consistency and quality of the applicant's work and describe how to best support the person should they be hired



Inclusion Tip

Broaden References

When an applicant has not been in the workforce recently or at all, consider broadening references. A supervisor from a volunteer job, an employment program manager, job coach or an instructor/teacher/professor may be able to provide relevant and valuable information about the applicant's ability to do the job.

“ Staff are always committed and driven to accomplish a shift. ”



Reference Check Questions

Preparing your questions in advance will help you to make efficient use of the reference check and make an effective hiring decision.

- ✓ **Ensure that all questions relate to the requirements of the job, as well as employee performance and conduct during their previous job(s)**
- ✓ **Probe beyond yes or no answers and try to get concrete examples of the referee's experience working with the applicant**

Here are some sample questions to ask during a reference check:

- What was your relationship to the applicant?
- How long was the applicant employed at your company?
- What were the applicant's main responsibilities?
- How would you describe the applicant's key strengths?
- What are the applicant's weaknesses and what worked to overcome those?
- Why did the applicant leave the position?
- How could we bring out this person's best on the job?
- Would you rehire this person if there was a suitable position?

Criminal Record Verification

If a criminal record check is required, candidates should be informed in advance why it's relevant to the role. You can make exceptions for offenses that are not related to the position and consider the length of time since the offense, or whether past offenses are currently still considered an offense as a result of updated laws, for example, possession or use of Cannabis.

Costs for any pre-employment checks should be covered by the employer.

Drug and Alcohol Testing

Ultimately, employers have a legal responsibility to provide a safe workplace. In industries that are highly safety conscious like aviation or transportation, employers may include mandatory drug and alcohol testing as part of the pre-screening process. The type of test will depend on the position and must be included as part of the application process, so candidates are informed in advance of the requirement. The employer is not obligated to proceed in the recruitment process if the applicant refuses to take the test.



Education/Certification Checks

An education or certification check is conducted to ensure that the applicant holds the level of education required for the job. Conduct education or certification checks only if they are bona fide occupational requirements. For example, is a high school diploma or a bachelor's degree mandatory or could the applicant have gained the required skills through practical on the job experience?



Inclusion Tip *Easing Back to Work*

Some people who have been out of the workforce for a long period of time, or people who live with multiple barriers, would benefit from working fewer hours of work at first, then scale up as the person eases into a schedule that includes work. If you are open to considering this, check with the individual first to see if this would help bring out their best to start.

