

Office of *Human Resources*

July 2022

HIRING PROCESS PLAYBOOK

A How-To Guide and Resources for Hiring Managers, HR Liaisons,
and Interview Panelists in Montgomery County Government



Developed using co-design and participatory methods

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Office of Human Resources and Innovation@MCG

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Designed for digital consumption

DISCLAIMER:

MCG is a large and complex organization with diverse hiring needs across departments, and no one document can capture every nuance. Individual department practices may differ from what is described in this playbook. This document should be considered a “living document” as it will be revised in the future to reflect our organization’s hiring practices as they improve and evolve. However, it may not always reflect the latest updates at any given moment. The roles, responsibilities, and processes outlined in these pages should be considered a starting point rather than the final word. **When in doubt, reach out to OHR.**

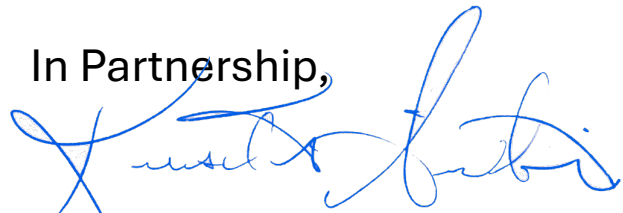
Greetings from Office of Human Resources (OHR) —

First and foremost, thank you for partnering with us to hire the right people for the right jobs at the right time. As an organization that employs over 10,000 employees across more than 30 departments, it is essential that Montgomery County Government (MCG) hires effectively, equitably, and efficiently. To achieve this goal, OHR is providing this playbook to outline key roles and responsibilities of those hiring for positions in MCG, clarify the actions required for a smooth hiring process, and to provide templates and other resources that departments can use when recruiting and hiring. The playbook comprises four chapters: Chapter 1 provides an overview of the hiring process, Chapter 2 describes how to set up candidate selection, Chapter 3 focuses on preparing and conducting interviews, and Chapter 4 describes how to select a candidate.

You may feel as though you have more frequent vacancies to fill. It's not just you. Nationwide labor trends indicate an increasingly competitive market for employers, especially local governments. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show the private sector has already won back 93 percent of jobs lost since February 2020, whereas the public sector has only gained back 53 percent. Employees are also staying with local government employers for an average of only 6.6 years in 2020, down from 8.3 years in 2016.

At MCG, we compete with regional private sector employers, universities, other local governments, and federal agencies for top talent across industries. To remain competitive, OHR is engaged in work to enhance our employer brand identity, develop long-term workforce strategies, and update our personnel management structures. We are excited to continue collaborating with you to optimize the hiring process.

In Partnership,



Krista P. Simkins

Chief Talent Acquisition Officer

Office of Human Resources

Letter from OHR's Chief Talent Acquisition Officer

Office of *Human* Resources

Vision, Mission, & Values

The playbook celebrates the vision of OHR, which is for MCG to be a model organization, welcoming workplace, and innovative workforce. To achieve this vision, OHR aspires to work together with hiring departments in a strategic partnership that is grounded in collaboration, agility, and human-centered values.

Our mission is to cultivate strategic partnerships, drive organizational change, and empower our workforce through transformative human resource solutions.

In our daily work, we strive to embody our REACH values:

Results-oriented, Empowering, Agile, Collaborative, and above all Human-centric.

Destination

GOAL ONE

Pivot from a transactional hiring process towards a human-centered mindset. We need to imagine hiring as a strategy to develop the next generation of the Montgomery County workforce, rather than simply a process by which we fill a position.

GOAL TWO

Create collaborative and transparent processes to build the workforce equitably and efficiently. As we build more robust and consistent hiring practices, we need to create a healthy learning environment while still holding each other accountable to standards of work.

GOAL THREE

Make biases and their associated countermeasures more visible to ensure an equitable hiring process for candidates. Hiring is a human process, and humans are imperfect. We acknowledge when implicit biases are most likely to emerge throughout the hiring process so that we can mitigate them to the best of our ability.

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Purpose of this Playbook

Who should use this playbook?

This playbook serves as a toolkit for hiring teams across MCG. Hiring teams comprise a combination of Hiring Managers, Human Resource Liaisons (HR Liaisons) and Interview Panel Members. This playbook should be used by hiring teams to develop a shared understanding of the hiring process.

Why does MCG need a playbook for hiring?

MCG has 37 departments, with numerous divisions within them. Each department and division work differently, contributing to variability in hiring practices. The playbook aims to establish standard operating procedures throughout the hiring process, with the goal of making the process better and more efficient across MCG. By using the guidance and tools contained in the document, we anticipate that Hiring Managers and HR Liaisons will have more time, capacity, and information to partner productively with their OHR recruitment team.

What does this playbook intend to address?

We hope this playbook will help to deliver consistent and impressive results in hiring across MCG. We also hope to save time for both hiring departments and OHR, decrease repetitive communication, and increase accountability between all stakeholders in the hiring process. This playbook serves as a how-to guide for hiring departments to understand and be able to implement each step of the hiring process.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Please remember that all candidate information is CONFIDENTIAL.

Hiring departments should not discuss candidate names, rating categories, or any other information pertaining to candidates or the rating process with anyone not directly involved in the selection process. **Questions from individuals who are not directly involved in the selection process should be referred to the Recruitment Specialist co-leading the recruitment.**

Interview Panel Chair and Members should only use software approved by Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS) to exchange candidate information and interview notes.



Chapter 1

Hiring Process Overview



Hiring happens when you need to fill a role. Recruiting is the process of attracting top talent to your organization.

Roles

Recruiting and hiring necessarily entails working with people and building human capital in the organization. The roles and responsibilities described in this guide are drafted from a perspective of relationship-building and achieving shared goals together.



Recruitment Specialists

Serves as the subject matter expert on hiring and co-leads the hiring process from end to end with the Hiring Manager, providing consultation and handling the recruitment tasks in the applicant tracking system.



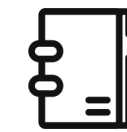
Hiring Manager

Is the co-lead from the hiring department on the specific recruitment, working alongside the Recruitment Specialist and sometimes also in conjunction with the HR Liaison for the department. The Hiring Manager typically acts as subject matter expert for the recruitment, determines the panel interview questions and takes the lead in making the final selection of a candidate in partnership with Panel Members.



Human Resource Liaison

Acts as the coordinator of hiring activities for their department and communicates with the Recruitment Specialist and department Hiring Manager on a regular basis about all recruitments.



Interview Panel Chair & Members

Work with the Hiring Manager and HR Liaison to prepare and conduct the candidate interviews and determine who is selected for the position. Interview Panel Members are required to have completed the training “Interviewing and Selecting Employees Course” before participating on an interview panel.

Responsibilities

Below are the specific responsibilities for each of the roles summarized above. Each chapter of this guide will also outline the action steps for each role, in each phase of the hiring process.



Recruitment Specialists

The Recruitment Specialist will partner, advise and guide the hiring department through the hiring process and establish goals for filling vacant positions.

The Recruitment Specialist is responsible for posting job ads, reviewing and validating the qualifications of applicants, providing an eligible list of qualified candidates to hiring departments, extending conditional and final job offers to candidates, and inviting new hires to the County's virtual orientation program.



Hiring Manager

Hiring Managers are responsible for identifying and assembling a diverse interview panel, defining an ideal candidate, and selecting the questions that panels will ask candidates for the given position.

Hiring Managers must lead (or designate a representative to lead) a consensus discussion to select candidates, after interviews have been conducted.



Human Resource Liaison

The HR Liaison acts as the connection between the hiring department and the Office of Human Resources. They coordinate scheduling and internal communications regarding recruitments, freeing up the Recruitment Specialist and Hiring Manager to focus on decision-making.



Interview Panel Chair & Members

Interview Panel Members should understand the requirements of the position for which they are conducting an interview, the interview questions and evaluation process. They must remain impartial throughout, and maintain the confidentiality of, the selection process.

Hiring Process Timeline

STEP 1

Launching the hiring process

Post the job ad and share the opportunity on social media: The first step is to develop a job ad to attract candidates. The usual job ad posting period is two weeks, but Hiring Managers can discuss with Recruitment Specialists the appropriate length of time for the position, including whether to keep it “open until filled.” Hiring Managers should also begin building the interview panel at this time.

SET YOUR HIRING TIMELINE
AVG DAYS TO FILL: 50 DAYS

STEP 2

Preparing for interviews

Schedule interview dates before while you wait for eligibility list: While Hiring Managers wait for OHR to compile the list of eligible candidates, they should work with Interview Panel Members to identify potential interview dates and times. Once the Recruitment Specialist sends the eligibility list, hiring departments will then be able to immediately begin scheduling interviews.

JOB AD: 10-15 DAYS
ELIGIBILITY LIST: 4-10 DAYS

STEP 3

Conducting interviews

Conduct interviews of the shortlisted candidates: At this point, hiring departments should provide available slots to candidates and schedule interviews. Departments may decide which candidates to approach first. HR Liaisons will support finalizing the schedule and preparing the Interview Panel Members and candidates for the interview.

INTERVIEWING: 10-15 DAYS
FINALIZING: 5 DAYS
AVG DAYS FOR DEPT SELECTION: 20 DAYS
For 5-8 interview candidates and 1 round of interview

STEP 4

Finalizing on the candidate

Discuss candidates and gather references: The Interview Panel Chair will lead the final discussion with Panel Members to discuss and select a candidate. Once a candidate has been selected, the Hiring Manager will conduct reference checks, make a final selection, and share the recommendation with the Recruitment Specialist.

STEP 5

Preparing for onboarding

Connect with County Departments to get logistics in order: Once the finalized candidate has passed the background and medical review, and final offer has been accepted, the Hiring Manager and department can start preparing for the candidate’s onboarding by identifying their workspace, assign a desk, and work on getting your candidate a County email and job-related software access.

BACKGROUND & MEDICAL CLEARANCE: 10 DAYS

Cognitive biases are patterns of thinking that affect all humans. A function of human biology, these biases evolved from a need to make quick decisions to avoid harm. In our modern world, however, these biases can distort our thinking and may lead to inaccurate judgments that can have a significant impact on the people with whom we come into contact. Cognitive biases can show up at all stages of the hiring process, making it more difficult for some candidates to be hired when, in fact, they would perform on the job as well as or better than other candidates.

The first step to overcoming these biases is to be aware that they exist. This section contains a non-exhaustive list of cognitive biases relevant to the hiring process. Throughout the hiring guide, we have noted where these biases may show up during the hiring process and specific action steps that hiring teams can take to mitigate them.

Many of the required steps outlined in this playbook (e.g., convening three-member panel interviews, developing and adhering to interview scripts) are designed to reduce opportunities for individual and collective bias to negatively affect the hiring process. In addition to these required steps, each chapter also includes best practices for mitigating biases that are most likely to emerge throughout the hiring process.

Cognitive Biases & How to Mitigate Them

IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION TEST

Project Implicit at Harvard University has developed a range of tests that will help you measure the strength of your associations and/or stereotypes.

Project Implicit > [Take a Test](#)

Cognitive Bias



FIRST IMPRESSION EFFECT

The First Impression Effect is a cognitive bias where a rater is strongly influenced by the first pieces of information they are exposed to about a candidate, including biographical details, appearances, body language, and non-verbal communication. This initial impression may influence how raters evaluate subsequent information, causing them to ignore any information that does not support the initial judgment.



HALO EFFECT

Related to the First Impression Effect, the Halo Effect is a cognitive bias in which a single positive characteristic of a candidate (e.g., physical trait, skill, achievement) has an outsized influence on a rater's evaluation of that candidate.



HORN EFFECT

The opposite of the Halo Effect is the Horn Effect, in which a rater's evaluation of a candidate is unduly influenced by a single negative trait (e.g., physical appearance, nonverbal communication, history of incarceration).



CONTRAST EFFECT

The Contrast Effect occurs when a rater's evaluation of a candidate is influenced by their assessment of the preceding candidate. An average candidate might appear excessively strong relative or unsatisfactory when observed and rated in close proximity to a candidate of vastly different quality.



SIMILAR-TO-ME EFFECT

The Similar-to-Me Effect occurs when a rater closely identifies with the candidate, either because of the candidate's background or responses to questions, thereby resulting in higher ratings than are justified.



STEREOTYPING EFFECT

Stereotyping is at play when a rater's evaluation of a candidate is based on generalizations about people of a particular group to which the candidate belongs (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, disability, etc.).

Cognitive Bias



LENIENCY EFFECT

The leniency effect is a cognitive bias in which raters tend to consistently be too positive when rating candidate performance, resulting in undeservedly high evaluations for candidates. Raters may be overly lenient because they fear that a harsh rating may reflect unfavorably on themselves, or it might affect their relationship with the person being rated.



CENTRAL TENDENCY

Sometimes a rater is inclined to "play it safe" by avoiding the use of extreme ratings, even when they are called for and justified, a cognitive bias known as the "Central Tendency Effect." For example, in an interview, a Panel Member may be reluctant to rate candidates high or low to avoid appearing prejudiced toward different genders or ethnic groups, or they might rank candidates mostly in the middle because they assume no candidate could be exceptionally good or bad.



STRICTNESS EFFECT

The inverse of the Leniency Effect is the Strictness Effect, which is the tendency of raters to be excessively and unjustifiably harsh.

RESOURCES

Research Worth Reading

Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology

- [What we know about applicant reactions on attitudes and behavior](#)
- [Cross-cultural interview practices research & recommendations](#)

Harvard Business Review

- [To reduce gender bias in hiring, make your shortlist longer](#)
- [A method for overcoming implicit bias when considering job candidates](#)

[Google's unbiasing hiring checklists](#)

CHECKLIST

How to Mitigate Biases

As the playbook guides hiring teams through the hiring process, it will identify specific steps for departments to mitigate the biases above. In general, the following principles will help hiring teams implement a fair and equitable hiring process and minimize bias:

- Follow a standardized hiring process** to promote objectivity and eliminate the possibility that some candidates will have a better or worse chance of succeeding because of rater bias
- Write a job ad with inclusive language** and promote it with intentionality to generate a strong and diverse group of candidates
- Incorporate multiple and diverse perspectives about candidates throughout the hiring process** to help mitigate individual bias and to develop a comprehensive picture of each candidate
- Provide a welcoming environment for all candidates** to help them do their best and so that they see MCG as a safe and positive place to work
- Evaluate candidates based solely on the competencies** that are needed to perform the job well, rather than on subjective or non-relevant traits



Chapter 2

Developing the Position

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Resources

MANDATORY TRAINING

Interview & Selection Training: Find the link in County Learning Portal by going into OHR Training Institute > Search for 'interviewing' > Select training that fits with your schedule.

These are monthly trainings which are highlighted in the OHR training newsletter. Hiring departments should monitor the trainings and proactively encourage staff of Grade 25 and above to undergo training.

USEFUL TOOLS

- [Hemingway Editor](#) to edit job ads for plain language
- [Online Resume Redactor](#) for blind resume reviews

Before reaching out to OHR

Before a hiring department reaches out to a Recruitment Specialist, the Hiring Manager and team should gather the necessary information outlined in the [hiring request checklist](#). This includes identifying the competencies needed for the role, building the job ad, and putting together the interview panel.

The first step to selecting the right candidate is to define the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of the person a department wants in the position for which it is hiring.

Knowledge is what someone in the position needs to know on their first day. This represents factual and procedural information a person has accumulated through a combination of education and experience.

Examples include knowledge of:

- Federal regulations and directives
- Operational systems and procedures
- Budget and accounting principals
- Engineering practices

Skills are measurable proficiencies in job-relevant areas that a candidate must have to be effective in the position. Skills are typically learned or acquired through training or past experience.

Examples include skill in:

- Keyboard data entry
- Motor vehicle operation
- Electronic or computer repair
- Second language proficiency

Abilities are the candidate's current capacity to perform the physical or mental activities needed on the job.

Examples include the ability to:

- Analyze situations, programs and problems
- Communicate orally and in writing
- Coach and mentor others
- Lift up to 40 pounds

REMEMBER:

In addition to knowledge, skills, and abilities, there may also be other characteristics needed by the selected candidate to be successful in the role. For example, a Hiring Manager may be looking to fill a position that requires candidates who can cope well and demonstrate patience with customers in a stressful, fast-paced work environment. Another example would be a position that has certain legally required certification or licensure.

The combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics comprise the competencies that a hiring department will be looking for in a candidate to fulfill the requirements of a given position. Defining competencies at the beginning of the hiring process sets a standard by which hiring departments can narrow the field of candidates based on their resumes and responses to interview questions.

OHR RECOMMENDED STEPS

Prepare for the Hiring Process

- 1. Use the [hiring request checklist](#) to make sure you have what you need to start the hiring process.** Once the Hiring Manager has prepared documents listed in the checklist, they are ready to email the Recruitment Specialist with the job ad, list of panel members, classification information, and a draft expectation of the hiring timeline.
- 2. The Recruitment Specialist, after receiving the information outlined in the hiring request checklist from the Hiring Manager, will refer to the classification information to better understand the position and support the hiring department with the recruitment.**
- 3. The Recruitment Specialist, HR Liaison, and Hiring Manager should work together to create a shared hiring timeline and workplan.** OHR recommends that stakeholders meet to identify roles, responsibilities and deadlines for interviews, deliverables, and other steps of the hiring process. Departments can use the [hiring workplan template](#).

RESOURCES

HIRING REQUEST CHECKLIST

Start with sending over the following details to your Recruitment Specialist to streamline the process:

- Information about the Job Opening:** Including Job Title, Working Title (if applicable), Position Number (PIN), and the number of vacancies to be filled.
- Information about the Job Ad:** Including how long the post will be active, for whom it will be open, and the detailed job start date.
- Job Ad Draft:** Think of what knowledge, abilities, and skills are required for this job. Use them to define a suitable person for the given position. You can also review [Improving Language for Inclusive Hiring Practices](#) for more guidance.
- List Minimum Qualifications:** Use the sample job ads in [Improving Language for Inclusive Hiring](#) to write precise and inclusive criteria for candidate assessment.
- Interview Panel List:** For best results, OHR suggests you choose your interview panel before advertising the job ad. Getting ready with selected times and dates helps schedule interviews promptly.

[GET THE CHECKLIST HERE](#)

CHECKLIST

Writing a Job Ad

- ❑ **Keep it short and simple:** Try to keep the job around 300-700 words. Include only relevant information and eliminate jargon and acronyms.
- ❑ **Appeal to the reader:** Speak directly to the applicant (e.g., “You should apply for this position if you...,” “As a Program Manager, you will...”)
- ❑ **Use objective, specific language:** Avoid using subjective adjectives (e.g., “excellent,” “outstanding”) and ambiguous language (e.g., “action-oriented,” “push the envelope,”)
- ❑ **Remember, less is more:** Create a more inclusive hiring pool by reducing the number of minimum qualifications and preferred criteria to only what’s necessary for the job (approximately 3-4 bullets per section), and emphasize skills and competencies needed over education. In other words, be direct in what you’re asking for in terms of knowledge.
- ❑ **Be purposeful with formatting:** Separate information using bolded headers, place the highest priority or most relevant information at the top, and use bullet points to list skills and main responsibilities.

RESOURCES

DEVELOPING THE JOB AD

A job ad is a combination of department overview, position description, responsibilities, and outline of a desirable candidate. Each hiring department writes a job ad to share the job opening within and outside of the County, with the aim that applicants can understand all nuances of the position before applying for the given position.



When developing the job ad, **solicit input from multiple people in diverse roles about the knowledge, skills and abilities** needed so they do not reflect one person’s background.



Guide to Improving Language for Job Ads

[GO TO THE GUIDE](#)

STEPS TO BUILD A PANEL

Creating a Diverse Interview Panel

- **The Hiring Manager must draft a two-sentence rationale for each member of the interview panel explaining why the individual is being requested for the panel.** For external candidates on the interview panel, the hiring department will be required to submit a resume of the proposed practitioner. Please keep a copy of the rationale for at least a year.
- **OHR recommends that the Hiring Manager meet with potential Interview Panel Members to discuss the following items with them:**
 - Context about the position
 - Vision of an ideal candidate, including the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position
 - Why the Hiring Manager is considering them for the panel and how they might best contribute to the panel interview. **This is particularly important for women, people of color, and people with disabilities who may otherwise perceive that they are being asked to join a panel simply because they represent a minority population, a practice known as tokenism.**
 - Inquire how many interview panels the person has facilitated in the fiscal year; if they have already been a part of more than three hiring interview panels, please consider another individual. **This measure helps to ensure that employees are not overburdened with hiring responsibilities, particularly women, people of color, and people with disabilities.**

OHR SUGGESTION LOOKING FOR PANELISTS

The Hiring Manager can work with their department's HR Liaison(s) to compile a list of internal department employees who have undergone, or ready to undertake, the training required to serve as an Interview Panel Member.

If the hiring department does not have enough potential Panel Members to conduct interviews, it is a great opportunity for the hiring department to invite others across the County to interview the candidates. Contact the Recruitment Specialist to discuss the possibility of reaching out to other departments.

Once the Panel Members are finalized and the department is ready to announce the job opening, the Hiring Manager should alert the Recruitment Specialist.

CHECKLIST

Building an interview panel

- Convene Panel Members with a diversity of experience and perspectives:** A panel that is diverse in terms of gender, race and disability will bring an important mix of experience and perspectives when evaluating a candidate.
- Look beyond the hiring department for subject matter experts:** Hiring Managers can recruit employees from their department or from other departments or agencies to participate on panels. Interview Panel Members should be the same grade or higher than the position being interviewed.
- Always have an odd number of Panel Members:** Panels should comprise of either three or five Interview Panel Members to simplify voting for the final candidate. OHR recommends an interview panel of three members so that hiring department prevents ties and intimidating the candidate.

Candidates won't apply for jobs they don't know about. Hiring departments can use this section to learn about different ways to promote the positions they are hiring for, based on what they are looking for in a candidate and who they wish to see and apply to the position.

PROMOTING THE JOB AD

Looking for Local Talent?

WorkSource Montgomery (WSM) focuses on linking local and regional economic development and workforce efforts in Montgomery County. WSM develops a deep understanding of target and emerging industry demands, creating sustainable workforce solutions that are tailored to the region. This increases the ability of individuals to compete for higher-quality jobs and employers to compete within the marketplace.

Wheaton American Job Center

wheaton@worksourcemontgomery.com
301-929-6880

Germantown American Job Center

germantown@worksourcemontgomery.com
240-406-5485

East County American Job Center

eastcounty@worksourcemontgomery.com
240-777-8412

[WSM WEBSITE](#)

Interfaith Works provides low-income and homeless individuals with job readiness classes, career counseling and training, and one-on-one job placement services in Rockville, Silver Spring, and Gaithersburg.

Donna Gabriel

Director of Vocational Services

dgabriel@iworksmc.org

Elena Mongello

Director of Operations

Emongello@iworksmc.org

Christian Pena

Admin Team

cpena@iworksmc.org

1-301-762-8682 ext. 271

[Interfaith Works WEBSITE](#)

Identity equips their program participants with the competencies, tools, and resources they need to succeed in today's job market and grow professionally.

Monica Aigner

Workforce Development Manager

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1-301-300-2778

Human Resources

humanresources@identity-youth.org

[Identity WEBSITE](#)

PROMOTING THE JOB AD

Looking for Local Talent?

CASA provides beginner and intermediate level English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes in the early morning hours at our Welcome Centers in Montgomery and Prince George's County. These classes empower day laborers to obtain higher-paying and more stable employment, communicate effectively with co-workers and employers, and understand workplace safety and workers' rights.

Use the following email and contact number to promote the job.

**CASA's Workforce Development Program,
Employment Program, and Small Business
Development Program**
CASACED@WeAreCASA.Org

CASA's Workforce Development Program
866-765-2272

[CASA WEBSITE](#)

Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) empowers a diverse youth population to successfully transition to adulthood through multicultural, comprehensive, and innovative programs that address social, academic, and career needs.

[LAYC WEBSITE](#)

Hiring departments may consider hosting office hours for the given position to increase awareness about their department and work. Creating space for job seekers and organizations that support them to interact with the hiring department can help community members feel more connected to their government.

PROMOTING THE JOB AD

Interested in Digital Outreach?

EARLY CAREER TALENT

Certain positions may represent a great opportunity for local youth. Hiring departments can collaborate with their Recruitment Specialist to identify local and online outlets through which to circulate job ads targeted at early career talent in the area and beyond.

For instance, Xiaoyu "Jade" Yan is a Hiring Liaison at the Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs, where they hire for positions ranging from Program Managers to Housing Code Inspectors. Depending on the position, Yan posts positions using handshake; University of Maryland, College Park; and University of Maryland, Baltimore. For inspector positions, Yan also posts job ads on International Code Council's (ICC) free job announcement portal. As a result, Yan can cast a wide net, making DHCA's job opportunities more visible to specific talent groups.

BEYOND MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Some positions require the department to conduct a search outside of the county or region. In this case, hiring teams might want to consider posting the job ad through job portals and social media to increase their reach. Employees of hiring departments may post the job ad on LinkedIn using their individual profile. They may also reach out to OHR team members Jacquelyn D. Anderson or Shirley Aceituno to highlight the job opening on MCG's LinkedIn account. Hiring teams can work with their Recruitment Specialist to identify other platforms and tools to amplify their outreach.

Note that job seekers are more likely to consider positions if the job ad is brief and direct. When sharing a job ad on social media platforms, consider using a concise, 1–2-page document that communicates the key aspects of the opportunity and skills required for the job, and briefly describes what an ideal candidate might look like. Include a link to the detailed job announcement in iRecruitment for more information and format the document as a PDF before posting.

OHR SUGGESTION SUPPORTING CANDIDATES

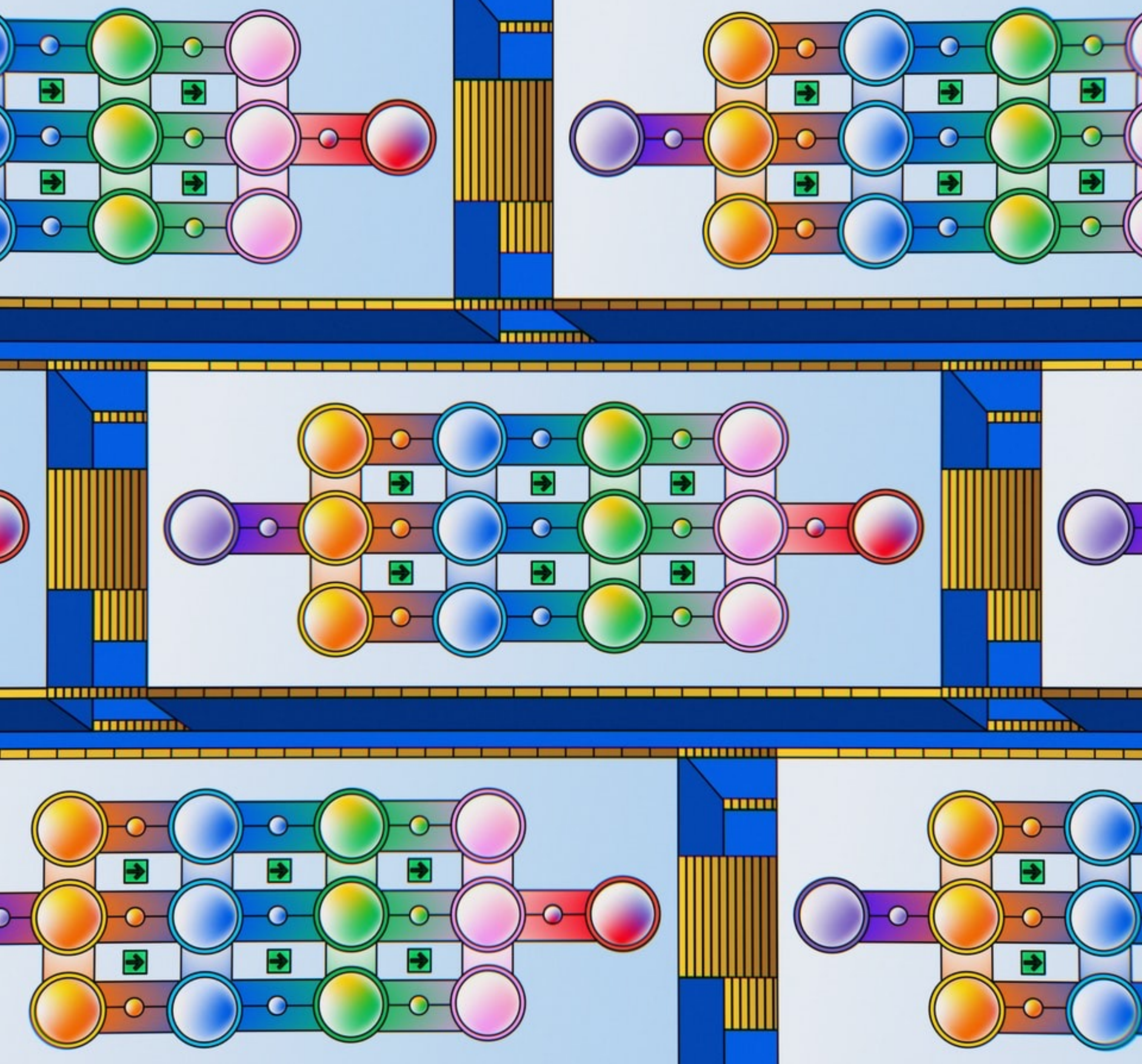
OHR has created a [quick guide for candidates](#) to put their best foot forward while applying for the job. The guide contains a summary of County benefits, a checklist of requirements, iRecruitment screenshots, and guidance on how to create a resume.

HOW TO MITIGATE COGNITIVE BIAS WHEN LAUNCHING THE HIRING PROCESS

- When developing the job ad, **solicit input from multiple people in diverse roles about the knowledge, skills and abilities** needed so they do not reflect one person's background.
- **Launch the recruitment process with a phone interview** to reduce bias based on physical characteristics.
- Where possible, **have more than one person support any step of the process in which a candidate is being evaluated** to ensure that a candidate is not being assessed incorrectly by a single reviewer.

Chapter 3

Preparing for & Conducting Interviews



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MANDATORY TRAINING

Interview & Selection Training: Find the link in County Learning Portal by going into OHR Training Institute > Search for 'interviewing' > Select training that fits with your schedule.

These are monthly trainings and highlighted on the training newsletter. Hiring departments can keep an eye out for them and proactively train their staff of Grade 25 and above to be trained on a recurring basis.

FORMS NEEDED

- [Panelists' disclaimer forms, signed and documented](#)
- [Interviewing and Selecting Employees Forms](#)
- [Consensus Interview Evaluation Form](#)
[To be relinked after webpage launch]

SAMPLES

- [Appendix I: Interview prep packet](#)
- [Appendix I: File nomenclature](#)
- [Appendix I: Folder organizing](#)
- [Appendix II: Emails to schedule interview candidates](#)

IN THE BACKGROUND

Reviewing Eligibility

The Recruitment Specialist will review the submitted applications based on the parameters and timeline defined by the hiring department. At this point, the Recruitment Specialist will conduct a holistic review of candidates using Proform and establish a list of eligible candidates based on minimum requirements set by the hiring department at the beginning of the hiring process. If the total number of applicants is less than 25, the Recruitment Specialist may share the resumes of all individuals who applied for the position. This section contains the best practices and guidelines for how hiring departments should interview and evaluate candidates.

OHR RECOMMENDATIONS CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Hiring Managers should be intentional in choosing how many rounds of interviews to conduct. For most vacancies, OHR recommends using the grade level of the position to decide between one and two interviews, not including an optional screening call. For vacancies below Grade 20, one interview is generally appropriate. For vacancies Grade 20 and above, Hiring Managers may find value in conducting two rounds of interviews. Keep in mind that each additional interview round creates a burden for candidates in the application process.

Generally, OHR recommends Hiring Managers assemble Interview Panels of three members, including the Chair. Interview Panels with five members may be intimidating to candidates, so this option should be selected as needed, not by default. **Note that these are recommendations, not requirements.**

Selecting Candidates for Interview

Once the Recruitment Specialist has shared the eligibility list and candidate information, the Hiring Manager can determine how many candidates will be interviewed by the Interview Panel. If they wish to interview only a subset of eligible list candidates, they should review the resume of every candidate in the eligible list against the knowledge, skills, and abilities laid out at the beginning of the process and prioritize candidates based on those criteria. **The Hiring Manager can use the following documents provided by the Recruitment Specialist to identify candidates:**

- **Hiring Manager Report:** Provides candidate responses to Preferred Criteria assessment questions
- **Candidate Resumes:** Accessed through Employee Self Service and viewed in iRecruitment Rater

The Hiring Manager is required to document their evaluation process and must keep the information for at least a year.

BYPASS PROCESS

If the hiring department does not intend to select a hiring preference candidate, OHR must approve the rationale to pass over a hiring preference candidate to advance to other candidates on the eligible list. The following special provisions apply to passing over a hiring preference candidate or highest rated category:

BYPASS STEPS

- Department submits a bypass form for approval to OHR Recruitment & Selection stating the rationale for passing over any preferred candidates on the eligible list.
- OHR Recruitment Team evaluates whether the request is for a proper and adequate reason, the sufficiency of the evidence, and whether any additional information is required.

BYPASS DECISIONS

- **If OHR approves the bypass request,** the hiring department may select another qualified candidate from the eligible list to proceed with the recruitment process.
- **If OHR does not approve the request,** the agency may not pass over the hiring preference based on the reason presented.

The Hiring Manager's Role and Responsibilities

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Develop behavioral-based interview questions that:**
 - ✓ Help Interview Panel Members understand the candidate's past performance under similar circumstances
 - ✓ Focus on specific incidents that detail what the interviewee did, said, accomplished, or learned in past workplace experiences — not hypothetical situations. **For example, the interviewer should ask the candidate to describe what they have done rather than what they would do in a specific situation.**
 - ✓ Target competencies that were identified at the beginning of the hiring process.
- Identify the total number of questions and assign competencies to each.
- Draft benchmarks or response standards and the competencies they relate to. **This will ensure that the interview evaluation can be measured fairly and objectively, based on pre-determined standards.**

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW (continued)

- Select either the three- or five-level evaluation scale for the Interview Panel Members to assess each candidate's responses.
- Determine if there will be one or two rounds of interviews and identify Interview Panel Chair and Members for each round of interview. **Remember, the same individuals cannot serve in two panels, including Hiring Manager serving as Interview Panel Chair.**
- Develop a different set of questions for the additional round of interviews.
- When scheduling interviews, share the time and location with the candidate in addition to the Panel Members. If the interview is virtual, include the webinar link and any other important details in the calendar invite.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Hiring Managers acting as Interview Panel Chair must follow the roles and responsibilities outlined in the next page.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Collect all completed documents, which may include recommendations, notes, and consensus forms from the Interview Panel Chair and Panel Members for documentation.
- Share the recommended candidate's details with the Recruitment Specialist. **More details on conducting reference checks, finalizing candidates, and sharing the recommendation with OHR are in the next chapter.**

PREPARING FOR AND CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS CHECKLIST

The Interview Panel Chair's Role and Responsibilities

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Assign an Interview Panel Member to serve as a timekeeper.
- Provide the materials needed for the interview (disclaimer form; list of questions for the candidates; list of questions for the Interview Panel Members with benchmark responses; evaluation forms; paper and writing utensils; resumes, if desired)
- Ensure that Interview Panel Members understand the knowledge, skills and abilities of the position.
- Ensure that Interview Panel Members understand the interview questions, the evaluation process and the Benchmarks.
- Maintain fairness and equity by reminding Interview Panel Members of the importance of remaining impartial and maintaining confidentiality of the selection process.
- Introduce the interviewee to the panel. Provide an overview of the interview structure. This may also include advising candidates of how much time is allotted for the interview.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Make the interview questions visible to the candidate (optional), either with a printed copy (for in-person interviews) or on the screen (for virtual interviews).
- Ensure that Interview Panel Members stick to the assigned questions and use follow-up questions for clarification only.
- Interview Panel Members should leave at least 5 minutes for the candidate to ask questions. Be mindful that applicants are not scored based on the questions they ask.
 - If the Interview Panel Chair is not the timekeeper:** Timekeeper may remind the Interview Panel Chair to create 5 minutes at the end of the call for the candidate to ask a question related to the job opening.
- Wrap up the interview by outlining the next steps (e.g., when a decision on the selected candidate may be made, how they will be contacted). Collect the written interview questions, if in person.
- If transcribing a virtual interview, take the candidate's permission before starting the transcription.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Ensure that all Interview Panel Members have signed and dated the appropriate forms.
- Ensure that all Interview Panel Members complete their individual evaluations of the candidate using the benchmark answers as a guide.
- Lead the discussion of the candidate and complete the consensus evaluation of that candidate (except for the recommendation) before moving on to the next candidate.
- When all interviews are complete, lead the discussion on whether to recommend or not recommend the candidate, or consider the candidate at a later date.
- Ensure that all Interview Panel Members have signed and dated the appropriate forms.
- Collect all materials and documentation (individual evaluation forms, consensus evaluation forms, Interview Panel Member notes, list of candidates scheduled for interview, etc.) to be maintained in a secure file in the department.

PREPARING FOR AND CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS CHECKLIST

The Interview Panel Member's Role and Responsibilities

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Submit the completed [Interview Panel Disclaimer Form](#).
- Reviewed the job ad, resume, and interview packet prior to arriving for the interview.
- Arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled interview.

[Sign the Panel Disclaimer Form](#)

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Ask only the assigned questions; however, Panel Members may ask follow-up questions to seek clarification without leading or introducing a new line of questioning. [Panel Members may request candidates to elaborate on their responses to help the interviewing team understand candidate's responses better.](#)
- Document each candidate's responses to the interview questions. This may look different for in-person and virtual interviews; talk to the Hiring Manager to understand the preferred way for taking and sharing notes.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Evaluate and complete an [Individual Candidate Rating Form](#). When evaluating responses, compare candidate responses to the pre-determined benchmark response and not to other candidates. This will ensure consistency in scoring. Be cognizant of the biases outlined earlier in this document and be careful to evaluate candidates objectively.
- Submit all materials to the Interview Panel Chair within three days of the interview.

[Get the Individual Candidate Rating Form](#)

REMINDER

Conducting the Interview

All Interview Panel Chairs and Members should know what kinds of questions are encouraged and prohibited when interviewing candidates:

PROHIBITED QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Panel Members are prohibited from asking questions that can identify the following attributes of the interviewee/candidate during the hiring process: age, citizenship, national origin, race/color, religion, disability, sexual orientation, marital status and family, economic status, past salary [figures], police record, or personal details unrelated to the job. These questions may look like the following:

- **Do you remember the 1980 election?**
- **Are you/spouse/parent born in the US or naturalized citizens?**
- **What language is spoken in your home?**
- **What religious holidays do you observe?**
- **Do you mind having a male or female supervisor?**
- **Are you married?**
- **How much did you make in your last position?**
- **Do you own a car?**

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

To ensure fairness and equity of opportunity, the questions for each candidate need to be same throughout the interview process. Any follow-up questions should be defined beforehand and asked only when a question is not answered. This measure helps to safeguard against unfair treatment of candidates; candidates who are asked, and have the opportunity to answer, additional questions are able to provide more data than other candidates who were not asked the same question.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION QUESTIONS

In addition to the competencies established at the beginning of the hiring process for a particular role, OHR recommends Hiring Managers consider diversity awareness and sensitivity competency as core attributes of the search. This competency intends to capture if the candidate demonstrates respect and sensitivity for the feelings, thoughts, and values of others who are both similar and different from the candidate. Members of Racial Equity CORE Teams, from departments across MCG, have begun developing questions that Hiring Managers and Panel Members may be asking during the interview to understand candidates' views on diversity and inclusion. These questions may look like this:

- **How will you contribute to the department's efforts to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion?**
- **Describe your understanding of diversity and inclusion and why it is essential to this position.**
- **Tell us about a time when you created an environment of honesty, inclusion, and respect.**

OHR shares these questions with the caveat that racial equity is not same as diversity and inclusion. To build a racially equitable workforce, hiring departments can use these questions to gain insights into interpersonal dimensions of equity and inclusion of the candidate. This may not speak to whether the candidate has a deeper understanding or tools to mitigate structural and systemic inequity.

BEST PRACTICES

Interviewing

Interviewing helps you select candidates by collecting and comparing data about them. When we collect data in person, it is important to facilitate a humane conversation and make interviewees feel as comfortable as possible.

For in-person interviews, the HR Liaison or Hiring Manager should book a conference room and include directions in the email or text confirmation. Include helpful information for the candidate, for example, where they can park, in your communications.

The Interview Panel Chair should collect Panel Members' notes within three days of the panel's candidate recommendation.

Panels have the option to share the list of questions with the candidate up to 15 minutes prior to the interview. This practice ensures that candidates have time to think and compose themselves so that they bring their best selves to the interview. Particularly for speakers of languages other than English, this additional time to think and reflect in their preferred language can give them needed space to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities in English.

OHR SUGGESTION SUPPORTING CANDIDATES

Interviewers do best when they are well prepared! Be sure to read candidate resumes and interview questions in advance of your interview, so you are familiar with the candidate and the questions you will be asking. You may consider holding a mock interview with your Recruitment Specialist, who can give you feedback on how best to effectively conduct the interview process.



Develop and ask interview questions that pertain solely to the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for the role. Limit follow-up questions to those needed for clarity.



Use a rating scale that eliminates a neutral option, thereby forcing panelists to make a choice on whether the candidate is a good fit. See Appendix I for more details.

Interviewing Candidates with Disabilities

As a reminder, the Interview Panel Chair and Members are not allowed to ask if the candidates have a disability during the interview. However, if the hiring team will be interviewing a preferred hiring candidate with a disability, below are guidelines for accommodating these and other candidates with disabilities. This guidance does not include all measures Hiring Manager and Interview Panel Members should be cognizant of, and they must work with any candidate who has a disability to accommodate their requests.

IN-PERSON INTERVIEW

- The Hiring Manager should confirm whether a candidate or an Interview Panel Member require an interpreter for an interview. It would be important to ask the candidate if they have a specific request for an American Sign Language interpreter or a combination of signed English. [To make interpreter requests, please email Anil.Saini@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Anil.Saini@montgomerycountymd.gov), at least 3-4 days before the interview.
- Make sure there is an accessible parking space, ramp or step-free entrance, and accessible restrooms and water fountains near the interview location. Be mindful of the additional travel time a person with disability may require.
- Allow time for the interpreter (if requested) and the candidate to discuss their positioning and preferences. Ideally, Interview Panel Members should organize the interview room so each person can view one another.
- If a candidate brings a Service Animal, do not pet the animal without permission. Please remember a Service Animal is not a pet; it is working.
- While interviewing a candidate who is deaf or hard of hearing, Panel Members should maintain eye contact while talking at a normal pace. The panel should interview the candidate in a normal manner. Do not say “tell the candidate my name is ...”
- When interviewing a candidate with a speech disorder, Panel Members should not assume that the candidate also has a hearing disorder or any other disability. Panel Members should avoid treating the candidate any differently than other candidates unless a specific accommodation was requested.

VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

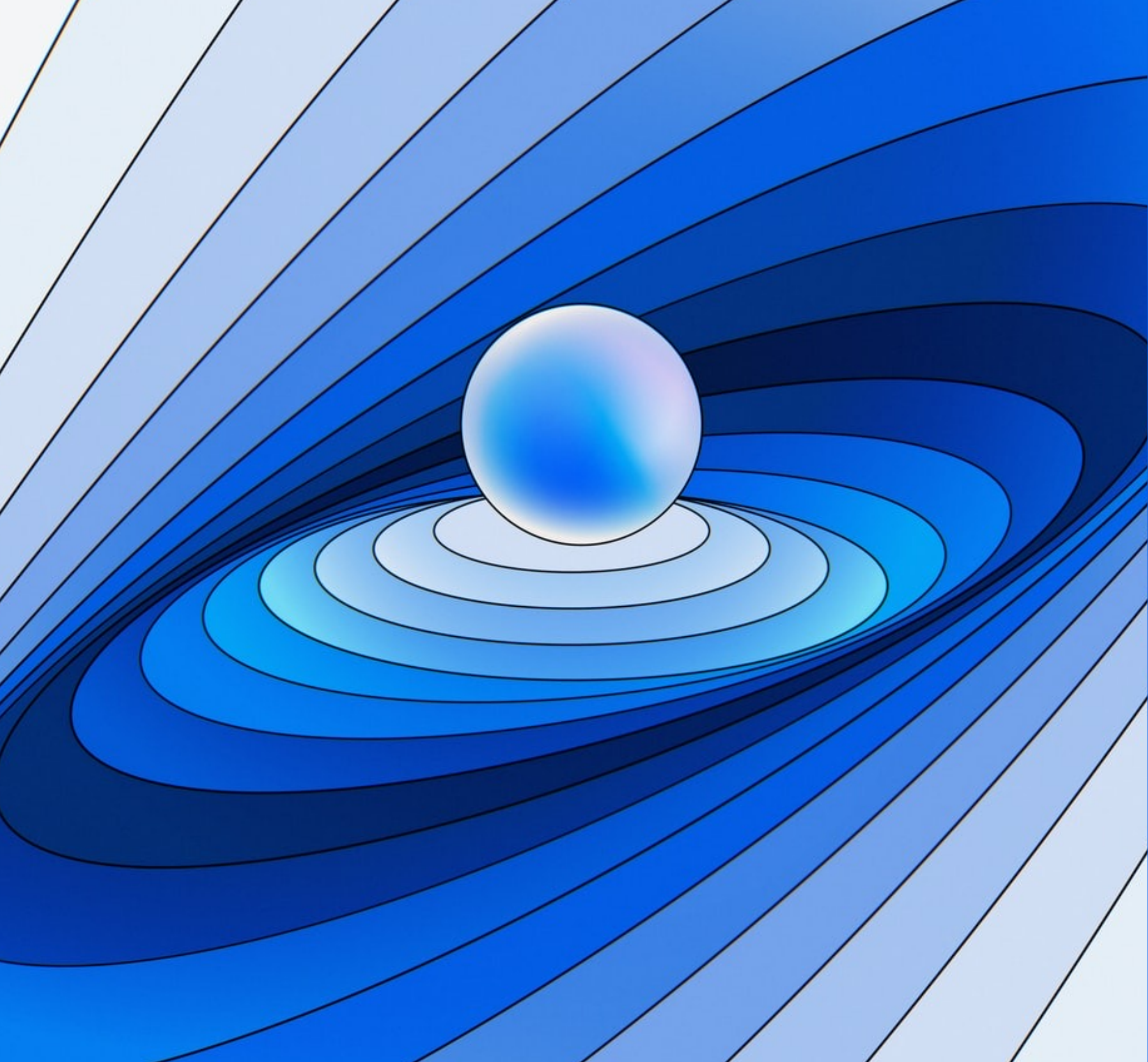
- The Hiring Manager should confirm whether a candidate or an Interview Panel Member require an interpreter for an interview. Ask the candidate if they have a specific request for an American Sign Language interpreter. [To make interpreter requests, please email Anil.Saini@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Anil.Saini@montgomerycountymd.gov), at least 3-4 days before the interview.
- Before conducting the interview, make sure the candidate and interpreter can see each other and are ready to start the interview.
- Reduce background noise by muting participants who are not talking during the interview.

HOW TO MITIGATE COGNITIVE BIAS WHEN INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

- **Determine in advance the questions you will ask of all candidates, and then ask them of all candidates**, so as not to unfairly challenge some candidates while ignoring red flags for those you like.
- **Use a rating scale that eliminates a neutral option**, thereby forcing panelists to make a choice on whether the candidate is a good fit. See Appendix I for more information.
- **Take verbatim notes** (or use the transcription feature of virtual meeting platforms) to give weight to what candidates said, rather than your initial impression.

HOW TO MITIGATE COGNITIVE BIAS WHEN INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES (CONTINUED)

- **Establish a panel of interviewers who bring diversity of thought and experience** to balance perceptions and reduce the likelihood that all interviewers will be affected by this bias.
- **Identify the competencies and qualities you seek to assess with panel interview questions**, and provide to panelists ahead of the interview so they are focused on what they are looking for.
- **Write the candidate's responses to the questions verbatim** (or use the transcription feature of virtual meeting platforms), so that you can evaluate their words, rather than their physical characteristics. This also enables you to later compare candidates' responses side by side.



Chapter 4

Finalizing on the Candidate

Chapter Contents

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Resources

MANDATORY TRAINING

Interview & Selection Training: Find the link in County Learning Portal by going into OHR Training Institute > Search for 'interviewing' > Select training that fits with your schedule.

FORMS NEEDED

- [Signed consensus](#) from all interviewed candidates
- [Bypass Highest Rating Category Request](#)
- [Bypass Hiring Preference Request](#)

SAMPLES

- [Appendix II: Email to non-selected candidates](#)

REMINDER

MCPR 6-8. Invalidation of rating process. The CAO must invalidate a rating process in whole or in part if an improper act occurred or if the rating process was not job-related or was discriminatory.

OHR RECOMMENDED STEPS

Finalizing on the Candidate

Now that Panel Members have gathered all the data necessary to select the final candidate, they are ready to have a debriefing session and sign the consensus form.

Panel Members should focus on the following items while completing their individual evaluation form and discussing the candidates' performance in interviews:

- **Rate candidates against each competency set at the beginning of the process**
- **Evaluate the strength and weaknesses of the candidate's relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities; training and presented experience; and their responses to the interview questions**

Panel Members must discuss all candidates. The Interview Panel Chair should facilitate the discussion, making sure every Panel Member gets the opportunity to share their thoughts. Avoid discussing how Panel Members felt about a candidate; instead remain focused on objective discussion points grounded in the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position, as set by the department. Panel Members should feel free to ask other Panel Members to explain their observations and reasoning, and to hold each other accountable to maintaining integrity of the process.

BYPASS PROCESS

If the hiring department does not intend to select a preferred candidate, OHR must approve the rationale to pass over a hiring preference candidate to advance to other candidates on the eligible list. **Hiring Manager must get the bypass form approved before the Recruitment Specialist drafts the Contingent Offer.** The following special provisions apply to passing over a hiring preference candidate or highest rated category:

BYPASS STEPS

- Department submits a bypass form for approval to OHR Recruitment & Selection stating the rationale for passing over any preferred candidates on the eligible list.
- OHR Recruitment Team evaluates whether the request is for a proper and adequate reason, the sufficiency of the evidence, and whether any additional information is required.

BYPASS DECISIONS

- **If OHR approves the bypass request,** the hiring department may select another qualified candidate from the eligible list to proceed with the recruitment process.
- **If OHR does not approve the request,** the agency may not pass over the hiring preference based on the reason presented.

OHR RECOMMENDED STEPS

Reference Checks

Once the Interview Panel Chair and Members have evaluated and finalized candidates; the Hiring Manager will conduct a reference check for selected candidate(s) before recommending the candidate(s) to the Recruitment Specialist. In a reference check, hiring departments are looking for confirmation of and/or additional information about position-related factors, such as:

- Technical or leadership skills
- Degree of supervision required
- Dates of employment

The Hiring Manager must avoid subject matter not related to the job, which may include familial status, residence, social activities, age or salary. The Hiring Manager should check at least two references for each candidate. OHR recommends conducting three reference checks to prevent navigating opposing views of referees.

To identify these individuals, hiring departments can request the following information from finalized candidates:

- Name of reference**
- Relationship to the candidate**
- Position**
- Email and phone number**
- Organization**

OHR RECOMMENDED STEPS

Conducting Reference Checks

The Hiring Manager should schedule a brief call with the supervisor or manager referred by the candidate. When crafting questions for the reference check, refer back to the knowledge, skills, and abilities identified at the beginning of the process to address any gaps in information about the selected candidate. Hiring Managers must avoid subject matter not related to the job. They must also document the candidate's responses and save the information to the candidate's file.

OHR has provided a [candidate reference form](#) that Hiring Managers can complete directly in SeamlessDocs and save to the candidate's file. Alternatively, Hiring Managers may use their own format and questions to interview references. **Below are sample prompts that OHR recommends asking:**

- Can you tell me what this person did for your organization? Can you confirm their start and end dates?
- How would you describe this candidate's overall job performance and quality of work?
- How did this person compare to other individuals in a similar position?
- What areas required improvement and/or additional training?
- What are this person's strengths? Can you give me an example?
- How does the candidate handle constructive criticism?
- How does this person deal with conflict? How do they handle stress and pressure?
- What type and degree of supervision did this person have? How did they respond?
- How would you compare this person's most recent work with the work they performed at the time of hire?
- Would you rehire this person? If so, in what capacity?
- What advice would you give this person's next boss to set them up for success?
- How well does this person work on a team? With their coworkers/supervisor/customers or clients?
- Is there anything I have not asked you that you want to share with me?

OHR PROCESS

Contingent Offer & Candidate Review

By this point, the Hiring Manager has identified suitable candidates, finished reference checks, and made a hiring decision.

The Hiring Manager should share the information listed in the table with their Recruitment Specialist. Once the Recruitment Specialist has all the required information, they will draft and extend the conditional offer to the candidate by phone and follow up with an email.

At this point, there is no need for the hiring department to contact the candidate.

The Recruitment Specialist will lead the conversation to keep medical, educational, and personal details of the candidate confidential while they undergo the medical and background check. The hiring department may request a status update from the Recruitment Specialist if they do not get an update within the first seven business days of this process.

If the Hiring Manager has any contact with candidates at this stage of the process, it is important that they avoid making any verbal commitment, written commitment or official offer to any candidate until after OHR has extended the conditional offer. **In particular, Hiring Managers must NOT:**

- **Discuss the exact salary expectations or figure**
- **Indicate the candidate has been selected or rejected for the job**

OHR needs the following items to prepare the contingent offer for the candidate:

External Candidate	Internal Candidate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IRC#• Interview Date• Applicant• Title• Grade• Position Number• Supervisor's name• Supervisor's employee ID• Supervisor's salary• Supervisor's contact no.• Report on 2nd Day (Remotely/In person):• Report time• Report to Address• Schedule• Effective Date: To Be Determined (TBD)• Salary• Financial Disclosure Filer• Essential Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IRC#• Interview Date• Applicant• Employee ID• Title• Grade• Position Number• Supervisor's name• Supervisor's contact no.• Report on 1st Day (Remotely/In person)• Report time• Report to Address• Schedule• Effective Date: To Be Determined (TBD)• Salary (no salary change; 5%; 10%; Above 10% *requires additional items*; etc.)• Financial Disclosure Filer• Essential Personnel

BEST PRACTICES

Closing Out the Hiring Process

FINALIZING ON CANDIDATES

- ❑ Once all candidates have been interviewed, Panel Members should review their evaluation forms and determine the top candidate(s) based on evaluations received in the interview.
- ❑ While deliberating, remember to reflect on which candidates were able to directly answer the questions asked during the interview.
- ❑ The HR Liaison or Hiring Manager should capture all forms, notes, and documents at the end of the interview cycle before sharing the selected candidate with the Recruitment Specialist. Federal law requires that all records be kept for one year. All selection material, including how candidates were selected for interviews (if not all are interviewed), evaluation forms, and interview notes, should be placed in a secure file and maintained by the Hiring Manager in case these documents are needed by OHR.

CONDUCTING REFERENCE CHECKS

- ❑ When conducting reference checks, ideally the Hiring Manager will request that the candidate provides a former manager or supervisor rather than a peer or HR representative. However, Hiring Managers should keep in mind that this is not always possible for the candidate. For example, some workplaces have a policy that prohibits managers from providing references, or the candidate may simply not have had a good relationship with their manager.
- ❑ When conducting reference checks, the Hiring Manager should not discuss past salary of the selected candidate.

INFORMING CANDIDATES OF DECISIONS

- ❑ After the selected candidate has accepted the offer, those candidates who interviewed and were not selected should be notified that they were not selected. This can be done either verbally or in an email. For internal candidates, a personal phone call or conversation is encouraged. This communication is generally done by the Hiring Manager. A sample communication is included in Appendix II.

UPCOMING

After Selection

Once the Hiring Manager has finalized the candidate with the Interview Panel Chair and Members and informed the Recruitment Specialist of their selection, they should begin taking steps to close out the process, including collecting all required documentation. After the medical and background review is complete, the Recruitment Specialist will extend the final offer to the selected candidate and communicate the final decision to the Hiring Manager.

The Hiring Manager should wait for the selected candidate to accept the final offer to inform any non-selected candidates of their status. Hiring Managers may use the sample communication to non-selected candidates in Appendix II. If a non-selected candidate requests feedback, the Hiring Manager should consult with their Recruitment Specialist if they are unsure of next steps.

The current version of the playbook guides stakeholders through the most critical components of the hiring process as they are today, but it will be updated in the future with any revisions and additional guidance to help improve the hiring process for department teams. [In the meantime, Hiring Managers should consult their Recruitment Specialist for items not covered in this playbook.](#)

OTHER

HIRING RESOURCES

FORMS (SeamlessDocs)

[Bypass Highest Rating Category Request](#)

[Bypass Hiring Preference Request](#)

[Interview Panel Disclaimer Form](#)

[Non-Competitive Rehire Form](#)

[OMS Medical History Review Form](#)

[PACE Contract](#)

[Temporary Promotion MCGEO 10 days or more](#)

[Temporary Promotion MCGEO Less than 10 days](#)

[Temporary Promotion Non-Represented](#)

[Retiree Rehire Form](#)

DOCUMENTS & LINKS

[Candidate Rating Process](#)

[Common Recruiting Terms](#)

[Employment Initiatives for People with Disabilities](#)

[Equivalencies for Education and Experience](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

[Hiring Preferences for Veterans](#)

[Job Classification Plan](#)

[Resume Preparation Tips](#)

- Process Definitions
- Hiring Department Roles
- Evaluation Scales
- Storing Interview Files

Process Definitions

HIRING PROCESS

The "hiring process" starts when the Hiring Manager is ready to post the job ad on iRecruitment and approaches the Recruitment Specialist to define the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position, outline the eligibility criteria, and finalize the job ad language. The active hiring process begins when the position has been approved and ends when the selected candidate accepts the final offer.

TIME TO HIRE

MCG calculates "time to hire" as the number of days to fill a position starting from when the job ad is posted (e.g., on iRecruitment) until the selected candidate accepts the final offer. This differs from measuring the length of the active hiring process. Time to hire is not equivalent to how long a position is vacant for because vacancy does not indicate that department has actively engaged in the hiring process.

ELIGIBILITY LIST

Group of qualified candidates who match the requirements of the hiring department and their job ad. They can be classified in the following statuses:

- **Eligible List – Well Qualified:** candidates who qualify as the highest rating category because they have more relevant work experience than others in the applicant pool.
- **Eligible List – Qualified:** for recruitments where all candidates who have met the Minimum Qualifications (MQ) are placed on Eligible List.
- **Eligible List – Lateral Transfer:** candidate applying for position of same grade and placed on Eligible List.
- **Eligible List – Promotion:** candidate applying for position of higher grade and in the most qualified group of candidates/placed on Eligible List.
- **Eligible List – Voluntary Demotion:** candidate applying for position of lower grade and placed on Eligible List.
- **Qualified After Review** – candidates who have met the MQs but are not on the Eligible List. Under certain circumstances Qualified After Review candidates may be interviewed. Please contact your HR Specialist for guidance.

HIRING PREFERENCE CANDIDATE

For an applicant to be considered as a hiring preference candidate, they have to meet two requirements:

- Be a qualified or well qualified candidate on the eligible list
- Qualify as a veteran, a person with a disability, or a veteran with a disability

Details of these preference designations can be found on OHR's [Disability Employment & Initiatives](#) webpage under "Hiring Preference.

If the applicant qualifies as a preferred candidate, the hiring department will interview them before other eligible candidates. If during the interview phase the preferred candidates are not selected for the position, the Hiring Manager will be required to submit a bypass form to proceed with their hiring process. After the Recruitment Specialist reviews and approves the bypass form, the hiring department may then consider and interview other eligible candidates.

Hiring Department Roles

HIRING MANAGER ROLES BY DEPARTMENT SIZE

Small departments/divisions with 1-10 hires over 3-4 FYs

Smaller departments may not have HR Liaisons, in which case the Hiring Manager takes on the responsibilities of the HR Liaison.

Departments with fewer than 20 hires per FY

Depending on the size of the department, the Hiring Manager may share the responsibilities of a typical HR Strategy Liaison.

Large departments with 50-200+ active openings

Departments such as Health & Human Services, Alcohol & Beverage Services, and MCPL qualify under this category, as they have a high rolling vacancy and have established their own HR teams that regularly collaborate with Recruitment Specialists to ensure the department recruits and hires in compliance with Montgomery County Personnel Regulations (MCPR).

HR LIAISON ROLES BY AREAS OF EXPERTISE

HR Strategy

Under this category HR Liaisons have high level of expertise and understanding of human capital issues and processes and manage HR strategy for the department.

HR Consultation

With a working level of expertise and understanding of human capital issues and processes, these HR Liaisons troubleshoot escalated HR issues for department and OHR, acting as a connector between the subject matter experts. E.g., troubleshooting of labor relations/employee issues presented, vacancy or transaction backlog, etc.

HR Transactions

Completes or coordinates completion of Oracle transactions

Evaluation Scales

FIVE LEVEL SCALE

For interviewing larger numbers of applicants

- **Well Below Average** – applicant is not capable of performing the duties/responsibilities of this position as they relate to the functional area under review. They have no substantive experience relative in this area.
- **Below Average** – applicant is somewhat capable of performing the responsibilities of this position as they relate to the functional area under review. They have some relevant knowledge/experience relative to this area but would require a substantive amount of training to perform in this area adequately.
- **Average** – applicant is adequately prepared to assume responsibility for the functional area under review. However, the applicant does not possess a high level of expertise in the area and would require an average amount of training to perform at an effective level.
- **Above Average** – applicant has credentials significantly above the average candidate and would be considered well qualified in the functional area under review. The applicant reveals a high level of knowledge/experience and would require a small amount of training to be competent in this area.
- **Well Above Average** – applicant has outstanding credentials and would be considered very highly qualified in the functional area under review. Applicant reveals an expert level of knowledge/experience such that no additional training would be required for the applicant to perform in this functional area. Superior candidate.

THREE LEVEL SCALE

For interviewing smaller numbers of applicants

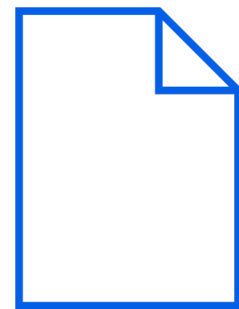
- **Below Average** – applicant is not capable of performing the duties/responsibilities of this position as they relate to the functional area under review. They have no substantive experience relative to this area.
- **Average** – applicant is adequately prepared to assume responsibility for the functional area under review. However, the applicant does not possess a high level of expertise in the area and would require an average amount of training to perform at an effective level.
- **Above Average** – applicant has outstanding credentials and would be considered very highly qualified in the functional area under review. Applicant reveals an expert level of knowledge/experience such that no additional training would be required for the applicant to perform in this functional area. Superior candidate.

Storing Interview Files

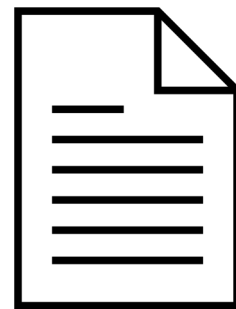
Interview Prep Packets

OHR recommends that Hiring Managers and HR Liaisons prepare and send packets to Interview Panel Members no fewer than three days in advance of the interview so they can adequately prepare. These packets should contain the job ad, position description, and any other interview materials identified by the Hiring Manager. Departments should feel free to include this playbook for Panel Members to review before they start planning the interviews.

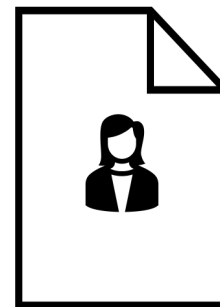
Tip: Use different color papers for consensus and evaluation form for each to stand out.



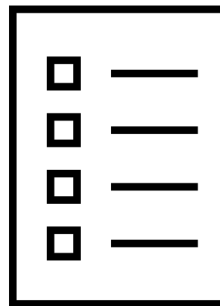
Evaluation Form



Questions, Job ad, etc



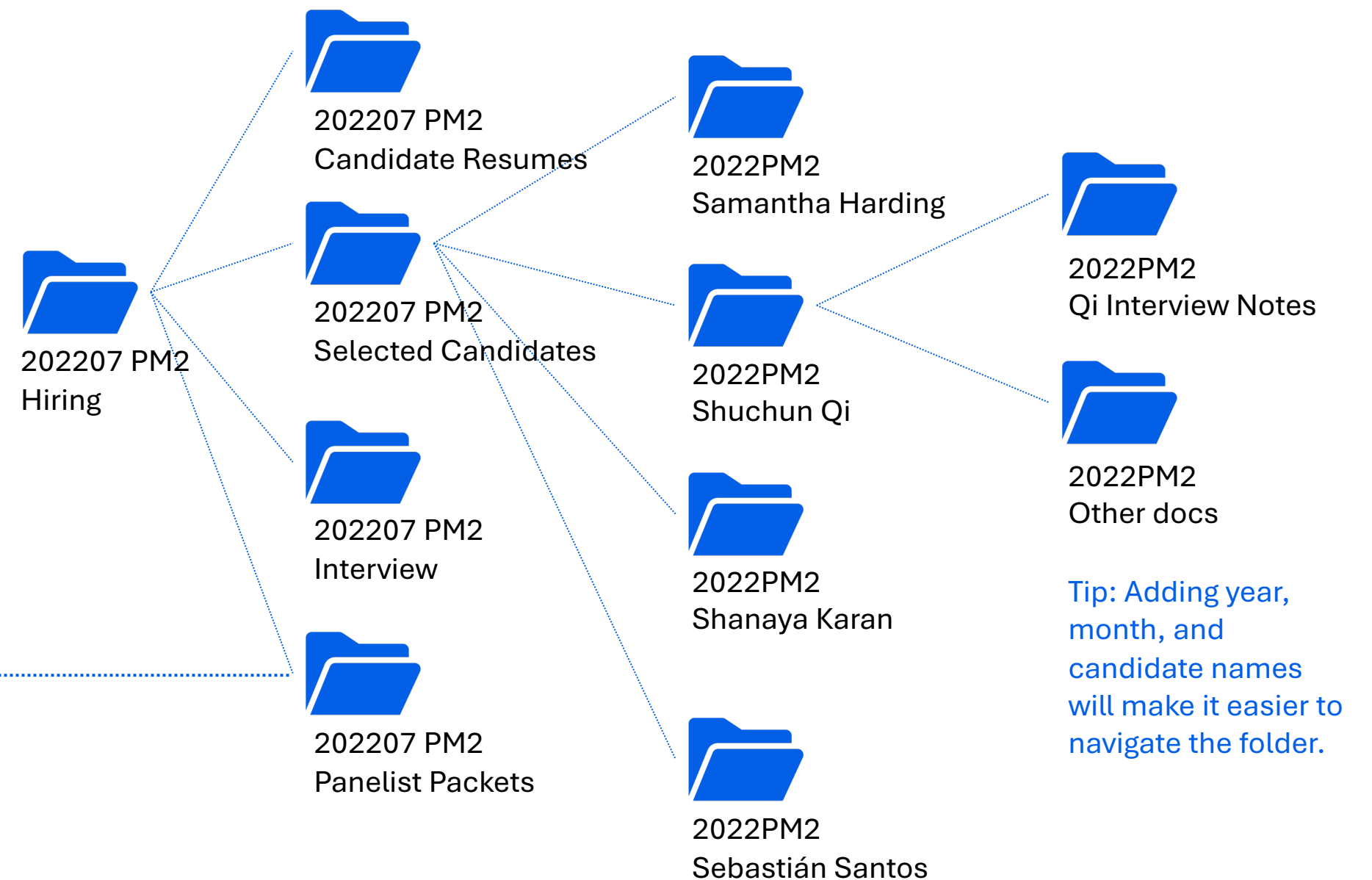
Resume(s)



Interview Schedule

Documenting Interview Files

All hiring departments must keep their interview records for at least one year. The next chapter (“Finalizing Candidates”) contains guidance for hiring departments on proper documentation of the hiring process and what hiring departments are required to share with Recruitment Specialists in order to proceed with a conditional offer.



Tip: Adding year, month, and candidate names will make it easier to navigate the folder.

Sample Communications

- Making the eligibility list (email)
- Virtual interview invite (email)
- In-person interview invite (email)
- In-person interview invite (text message)
- Non-selected candidate (email)

SAMPLE EMAIL

Making the eligibility list



Dear [Applicant] —

Congratulations! Human Resources has reviewed your application and you are on the “eligible list” for the [position title] you applied for with Montgomery County Government. We will be in touch if and when you are selected for an interview.

Here's where we are in the process:

- ~~• You found the job.~~
- ~~• You decided to apply.~~
- ~~• You got into the system and submitted your application.~~
- ~~• Human Resources reviewed the applications and determined you were eligible.~~
- **NOW:** Hiring department team reviews eligible applications provided by Human Resources.
- We reach out to selected applicants to schedule initial interview with information on what to expect next.
- We begin the interview and selection process.
- Human Resources extends contingent offer.
- Future unfolds.

Thank you for applying for the [position title] role with Montgomery County Government. We are thrilled by your interest in the Montgomery County Government. We look forward to getting to know you through your application.

With gratitude,
[Sender]

SAMPLE EMAIL

Virtual interview invite



Dear [Applicant] —

Thanks for hoping on to the call to share your availability for the interview.

You are scheduled to interview for the [position title] with Montgomery County Government, [department name] on: Wednesday, May 18, 2022. 11:00 am.

Please join the call 15 minutes before your appointment (10:45 am) to allow yourself time to review the interview questions. We do this to ensure you are prepared and confident about your answers. We want to support you being your best!

[Virtual meeting details such as this would be generated by Teams when you set-up a meeting]

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app

Click here to join the meeting

Or call in (audio only)

+1 443-692-5768,,790156790# United States, Baltimore

Phone Conference ID: 790 156 790#

If you have any questions or will be unable to make your appointment, please let me know.

With gratitude,

[Sender]

SAMPLE EMAIL

In-person interview invite



Dear [\[Applicant\]](#) —

Thanks for hopping on a call to share your availability for the interview.

You are scheduled to interview for the [\[position title\]](#) with Montgomery County Government, [\[department name\]](#) on: Wednesday, May 18, 2022. 11:00 am.

Please arrive 15 minutes before your appointment (10:45 am) to allow yourself time to review the interview questions. We do this to ensure you are prepared and confident about your answers. We want to support you being your best!

[\[Enter address and navigation details:\]](#) Our office is located at 1401 Rockville Pike, 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20852. Entrance to the underground parking garage is in the rear of the building. The receptionist will validate your parking ticket. The closest metro station is Twinbrook Station on the red line.

If you have any questions or will be unable to make your appointment, please let me know.

With gratitude,
[\[Sender\]](#)

SAMPLE TEXT MESSAGES

In-person interview invite



Scheduling message:

Hi [Candidate name]. We would like to confirm that you have been selected for an interview and scheduled to interview for the [position title] with Montgomery County Government, [department name] on: Wednesday, May 18, 2022. 11:00 am. Please arrive 15 mins before the appointment to review the questions before your interview. The interview will be in office, located at 1401 Rockville Pike, 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20852.

Reminder:

Hi [Candidate name]. Our interview this afternoon will be in our office, located at 1401 Rockville Pike, 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20852. Don't hesitate to contact me if you need any help. We are looking forward to meeting you!

While emails are required to apply for MCG jobs, some candidates may be more reachable on phone. Hiring departments can use the text samples to draft and share text updates with their candidates.

SAMPLE EMAIL

Non-selected candidate



Dear [Applicant] —

Thank you for applying for the [position title] at [department], Montgomery County Government. At this time, we have decided not to advance your application to the next phase of the hiring process.

I want to thank you for the time and effort you spent on your application. We know interviewing takes hard work on your part and we hope not to discourage you.

We encourage you to check our other job vacancies and apply again. We appreciate your trust in public service and enthusiasm for working for the people of Montgomery County.

With gratitude,
[Sender]

Frequently Asked Questions

Can two employees sit in the same position at the same time if one employee is about to retire?

Yes. If an employee announces that they are leaving County employment and the department wants an overlap in the occupancy for a position (for training purposes, no loss in institutional wisdom, etc.), the department can request a “temporary overage” from OMB to allow two people (the incumbent who is retiring and the new person) to sit in the same position number at the same time. OHR Recruitment Specialists encourage departments to request authorization early so that the recruitment process can begin soon enough to take advantage of the temporary overage. OHR also cautions departments about asking an employee about their retirement planning. A workflow was developed by OMB and OHR Classification that outlines the process for requesting a temporary overage: OHR & OMB Position Management Workflow.

If you know an employee is leaving, when can the position be advertised?

Depending on the timing, a position potentially can be advertised right away when someone retires or leaves. If a two-week notice is being provided by the retiring person, there is no issue with posting the position as soon as possible as there would not be two people sitting in the same position at the same time.

Do departments have access to all job applicants who rate as “Qualified”?

Yes. Departments have the option to request their OHR Recruitment Specialist to establish an eligible list at Qualified instead of the Well qualified/Qualified split. Anyone who has access to the recruitment (such as Hiring Manager, HR liaison) also has access to the applications of all “Qualified” applicants, not just to “Well-qualified” applicants. The context for this question is always important. There are several nuances that could impact the appropriate approach. Access to all “Qualified” applicants gives the department access to both “Qualified” and “Well-qualified” candidates.

Does a job posting always need to have preferred criteria?

OHR Recruitment and Selection also offers departments the option to advertise without any preferred criteria or to include information in their announcements about how candidates will be selected for an interview invitation. All departments are notified that job-related criteria are the only legitimate means of extending invitations to applicants for interviews and this information is included in the eligible list email that goes to departments (HR liaison and/or Hiring Manager).

Can our department utilize OHR's LinkedIn access?

The OHR Recruitment and Selection Team has access to highlight a limited number of featured jobs on LinkedIn that can be swapped in and out as often as needed, with a best practice of highlighting jobs for at least seven calendar days at time. In addition to the posting, the Team will also be able source for active and passive candidates. Your OHR Recruitment Specialist will be able to provide you with resumes that have been harvested from the search, so hiring leaders can start conducting exploratory interviews. The acquisition of LinkedIn allows the Team to cast a wider net and drive candidates back to MCG's careers page (www.WORK4MCG.com). Please connect with your OHR Recruitment Specialist if you would like to highlight your vacancies on LinkedIn. Your OHR Recruitment Specialist will then connect with one of the three LinkedIn ambassadors on the Team and your position will be posted.

Can the department conduct pre-qualification interviews (telephone screening) of applicants?

Yes, these types of interviews can be helpful for several reasons. Please refer to Chapters 2 and 3 for guidance.

How many Panel Members are required for an interview panel?

Here are some recommended guidelines:

- Departments should use an odd number of Panel Members.
- The interview panel consists of three or five individuals, for ease of scheduling and logistics OHR recommends only three members.
- Panel Members generally should be at the same grade level or a higher grade level than the position being advertised. An exception to this guideline should be discussed with your OHR Recruitment Specialist. For example, the expertise of a particular potential Panel Member may make them a logical choice for the panel. Keep in mind that it can be intimidating for some applicants to be interviewed by a group of very high-level Panel Members when the position itself is not a high-level position in the department.