



PERSONNEL RULES

APPOINTMENTS & STAFFING INTERVIEW PROCESS

§2106

Overview: Tehama County is committed to hiring qualified individuals who will contribute to the overall strategic success of our organization. With each new appointment, our goal is to hire an individual who is committed to making a significant impact to Tehama County. The intent of this rule is to outline the process for interviewing applicants.

Applicable to: All employees

Definitions: Follow Up Questions – A question that is asked after a structured interview question to provide the interviewee with a better understanding of the candidate's initial answer. For example, "What was the outcome of this project?", "Can you expand on that?", "Can you provide an example of a time when you used the method you described?"

Open Ended Questions – Questions that require more than a simple one word answer and typically allow for a more thought-out or meaningful response.

Soft Skills – Personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with others.

Structured Interview – An interview in which a particular set of questions are predetermined and prepared in advance of the interview, and each applicant is asked the exact same questions in the same order.

Guidelines: Well planned interviews are an invaluable tool for assessing an applicant's suitability for a position. Successful hiring decisions can lead to long-term employment, which may deter costs associated with recruitment and retention. In turn, applicants will also benefit individually from an effective interview structure, because it enables them to decide if their own employment needs and interests are going to be met. Structured interviews may enable employers to adequately gauge whether an applicant's experience and skills will be suitable within the department culture.

Applications for Tehama County positions are submitted through the on-line recruitment software program. Interviews may not take place until after the application deadline has closed. The department may review the applications anytime during the recruitment process and begin making appointments for interviews with the candidates. However, the review process is not over until the deadline listed on the job posting and all candidates have been considered. When scheduling interviews, it is important to allow enough time for each candidate to fully answer the structured questions and for the candidate to comment or ask questions.

Interviews are generally administered by the department, however Personnel Office staff is available to participate or assist departments with interviews upon request. For more information on screening applications, reference the Tehama County Personnel Rule for Recruitment and Screening Process.

Panel Selection

Interview panels are advantageous because hiring decision input is provided from multiple sources, rather than one source. (Merit Systems require that a panel is

utilized in the interview process.) Each department will be responsible for selecting who will participate on the interview panel and how the interview will be administered. Interview panels for the first round of interviews should consist of three to five members. Panel members may be employees who work within the department, someone who works directly with the department, someone who may have experience or knowledge with hiring practices and procedures, an objective outsider, or a subject matter expert within the specific occupational field.

One of the panel members should be designated to lead the applicant through the interview process. This person should welcome the applicant, introduce the panel members, confirm the job title and department, and provide the applicant with a brief overview of how the interview will be administered. The overview should inform the candidate of the time limit and the number of questions to be asked.

Interview Questions

The best practice for creating questions would be to determine the ideal qualities of the candidate and formulate the questions to best address those qualities. It is also useful to ask questions that will have unique responses from each candidate to determine individual abilities. Avoid questions that provoke the usual rehearsed responses. Questions should be open-ended to allow candidates to expand on their personal strengths and characteristics. In addition, open ended questions help the panel members evaluate the applicant's communication skills, ability to problem solve, and their level of interest in the occupational field. Therefore, the usefulness of each interview question should be examined thoroughly.

Interview questions may only be asked if they are exclusively job related, so questions must be limited to an applicant's knowledge, education, skills (including soft skills) and experience. Keep in mind that federal and state employment laws prohibit employers from asking questions which are irrelevant to whether or not the candidate is capable of performing the essential functions of the position. It is pertinent interviewers avoid asking questions which could be construed as evidence of unlawful discrimination. The interview panel may not ask questions relating to:

- A persons protected class, such as; race, color, sex, sexual orientation, citizenship, marital status, ethnicity, age, religion, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, national origin and ancestry, political affiliation, creed, military or veteran status (type of discharge), physical disability, mental disability, medical condition or any other characteristic protected by state or federal law
- Citizenship
- A physical or mental disability (even if the candidate is clearly disabled)
- Financial status (credit history or bankruptcy)
- Arrests or convictions
- Prior salary, compensation, or benefits (You may ask candidates about their salary expectations.)
- Place of residence
- Physical appearance
- Birthplace
- Relatives not employed by Tehama County
- Membership in nonprofessional organizations

To ensure interview questions are appropriate and legal, interview questions may be forwarded to the Personnel Office for review at least 48 hours prior to the

interview date and time. Questions repeated in subsequent interviews within the calendar year do not need to be reviewed again. The Personnel Office cannot accept responsibility for the legality or appropriateness of questions if they are not provided for review in advance. Departments who choose not to submit questions in advance will submit them to Personnel with the results of the selection process.

Initial Interview Process

Applicants may be interviewed in person, by phone, or by other technological means. Regardless of the format, to reduce liability and ensure fair and legal employment practices, departments shall conduct “structured” interviews. In a structured interview, candidates are asked the same series of interview questions in the same order by the same interview panel. A typical interview will include ten to twelve questions, divided equally among the panel, so each panel member has an opportunity to interact with the candidate.

Panel members are free to ask additional inquiries or follow up questions throughout the interview process. Prior to the interviews, the panel may wish to discuss what would be ideal responses so that follow up questions would provide the intended information. Candidates should be allowed additional time to elaborate on their responses and ask clarifying questions. Statements which could be construed as an offer of employment or creating an employment contract should be avoided.

At the end of the interview, the applicant should be given an opportunity to provide additional information or ask questions of the panel members. This is also the candidate’s opportunity to make sure the position will be a good fit for them.

Each panel member should use a method of scoring or ranking candidates with predetermined criteria. The Personnel Office will provide a sample candidate evaluation form upon request.

Subsequent Interview Process (Optional)

Departments may elect to conduct more than one interview. Subsequent interviews may be conducted with a panel or as a one-on-one with the Department Head. If multiple interviews are held, the first interview is typically intended to be a screening interview in which the interview panel’s function is to assess whether the applicant has the basic skills to perform the job.

Subsequent interviews are an opportunity for reexamination and clarification. The subsequent interview should include more detailed questions with the goal of narrowing the focus to specific qualifications or personal characteristics which are of particular interest. The department may want to include different panel members in order to gather input from a broader selection of sources. As with the first interview, interview questions should be prepared in advance and all applicants should be asked the same series of questions, in the same order.

The Department Head may want to conduct the subsequent interviews as a one-on-one with the top candidate/s. Although the process may be more personable and less structured, the Department Head should still adhere to the law when asking questions. This is an additional opportunity for candidates to make sure the position will be a good fit for them.

Interviewees Not Selected

The Interview Chairman or their designee will contact unsuccessful candidates to

inform them that they were not selected for the position. Notification to unsuccessful candidates will occur regardless of whether the candidate is an external candidate or an internal candidate. Notification can be made verbally or in writing through the on-line recruitment software program or via email.

Accommodations

Disabled applicants may make a request for a reasonable accommodation during the interview process. Under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), Employers are required to provide a reasonable accommodation throughout all aspects of employment. Therefore, changes or adjustments should be made to ensure disabled applicants receive the same benefits and privileges as non-disabled applicants. If there are questions or concerns about an applicant's request for an accommodation, contact the Personnel Office for guidance.

Procedure: Responsibilities for implementation, application, and enforcement of this rule are listed below.

Department Head To ensure interview questions are appropriate and legal, the Department Head or their designee may forward interview questions to the Personnel Office for review at least 48 hours prior to the interview date and time. Departments who choose not to submit questions in advance will submit them to Personnel with the results of the selection process.

Personnel Office The Personnel Office will review interview questions as submitted by the departments to ensure compliance in state and federal employment laws and usefulness of interview questions. The Personnel Office staff may also offer guidance as to the ADA accommodations.

Required Forms: None

References: TCPR §2102: Non-Discrimination in Hiring; TCPR §2103: Recruitment; TCPR §2105: Screening Process; Americans With Disabilities Act www.ada.gov; California Department of Fair Employment and Housing www.dfeh.ca.gov; California Government Code §12952; California Labor Code §432.3; Civil Rights Act of 1964 §7, 42 U.S.C. §2000e et seq (1964); Military and Veterans Code §395-395.9; United States Code Title 38 §4301-4334 Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission www.eeoc.gov

Effective Date: October 2, 2018

The provisions of this Code shall not supersede any state law, federal Law or current collective bargaining agreement between an employee organization and Tehama County. The provisions of these Codes shall not preclude specific County departments from developing operational policies and procedures.