

# Interview Guide: Best Practices for Conducting a Fair and Effective Interview

## Why Ask the Questions that We Do?

### Predict Future Behavior

Behavioral based questions are designed to assess how candidates have handled specific situations they have experienced in the past. The best indicator of future performance is past performance; you can get a good idea on how they would handle a similar situation using this method.

## Questions to Avoid

- Illegal or Discriminatory Questions
  - Avoid questions that could be discriminatory or illegal based on factors like race, age, gender, religion, marital status, disability, etc.
  - Keep in mind that even if you don't ask the questions, some candidates overshare and may share this type of information unwarranted. Please do not notate any of that information since it is not part of the job expectations or requirements of the role.
- Overly Personal Questions
  - Keep focus on the candidate's qualifications, experience and skills. Avoid probing too deeply into their personal life.
- Questions Based on Assumptions or Stereotypes
  - Avoid questions based on preconceived notions or biases regarding the candidate's gender, age, or background.

## Bias Awareness

- Biases are unconscious or conscious mental shortcuts or tendencies that can affect our judgement, decision-making, and behavior. They are often influenced by personal experiences, societal stereotypes, or preconceived notions. While biases can sometimes help us make quick decisions, they can also lead to inaccurate or unfair judgements, especially in areas like hiring, performance reviews, and interpersonal interactions.
- In the context of an interview or hiring process, biases can negatively impact your ability to fairly assess a candidate's qualifications and fit for the role. They

may lead you to favor one candidate over another based on irrelevant factors, such as their appearance, gender, race or background, rather than focusing on their skills and abilities.

- We may not recognize when we are falling into any of these categories so being aware of your conscious and unconscious bias is essential when interviewing.

Here are some of the most common types of bias that can influence interviews:

- **Affinity Bias (Similarity Bias)**

This is a tendency to favor candidates who share similarities with you, whether in terms of background, interest, or personality traits. For example, you might unconsciously prefer candidates who attended the same college or have similar hobbies.

- **Impact:** This can lead to overlooking diverse perspectives or skill sets and limit the opportunity to hire candidates who bring new insights to the Town.

- **Confirmation Bias**

Confirmation bias occurs when you seek out or pay more attention to information that confirms your pre-existing beliefs or assumptions about a candidate. This bias can cause you to overlook information that contradicts your initial impressions.

- **Impact:** It can lead you to make decisions based on assumptions rather than objective evidence. For example, if you initially think a candidate isn't a good fit, you might focus on their weaknesses and disregard their strengths.

- **Halo Effect**

The halo effect happens when a single positive characteristic of a candidate influences your overall judgement of them. As a result, you might overlook other important factors like skills, experience or qualifications.

- **Impact:** It can result in overestimating the candidate's abilities or performance, leading to an unfairly positive evaluation based on one trait.

- **Horn Effect**

The opposite of the halo effect, the horn effect occurs when one negative characteristic or behavior of a candidate causes you to form a generally negative opinion about them.

- **Impact:** It can cause you to overlook the candidate's positive qualities or relevant skills because you focus too much on one flaw.
- **Gender Bias**  
This occurs when you unconsciously favor candidates of one gender over another.
  - **Impact:** Gender bias leads to unequal opportunities and limits diversity, preventing the best candidates from being evaluated based on their qualifications rather than gender.
- **Age Bias**  
Age bias involves favoring or discriminating against candidates based on their age.
  - **Impact:** This bias can result in overlooking highly qualified candidates simply because of their age, either due to underestimating their abilities or assuming they are less suitable for the role.
- **Racial or Ethnic Bias**  
This bias occurs when you make judgements based on candidate's race or ethnicity, either consciously or unconsciously. It could manifest in the form of stereotypes, assumptions, or biases about people from particular racial or ethnic groups.
  - **Impact:** Racial or ethnic bias can lead to discrimination, exclusion, or unequal treatment during the hiring process, preventing qualified individuals from being considered based on their race or ethnicity.
- **Name Bias**  
Name bias happens when you make assumptions about a candidate based on their name. For example, a candidate with a name that is more common in one ethnic group might be judged differently than one with a name that suggests another background.
  - **Impact:** This can result in unfair judgement or discrimination that isn't based on the candidate's qualifications or abilities.
- **Interviewer Behavior**
- **Be Respectful and Professional:** Treat every candidate with respect and courtesy. Be conscious of your body language, tone and words. Even if the candidate isn't a good fit, a professional demeanor reflects well on you and the Town.

- **Active Listening:** Listen carefully to the candidate's answers and give them time to respond.
- **Consistency is Key:** Ask each candidate the same set of core questions to ensure a fair comparison.
- **Clarify and Follow Up:** If a candidate gives a vague or unclear answer, encourage them to provide specific examples.
- **Take Notes:** Take notes during the interview to capture key points and avoid relying on memory. This will help when making decisions later and reduce bias in evaluating candidates.
- **Focus on Skills and Experience:** Ensure the questions are directly related to the job and avoid distractions based on irrelevant factors.
- **What Notes to Avoid:** Avoid writing down personal opinions or irrelevant details. Do not jot down assumptions or biased impressions. Stick to the facts and responses that reflect the candidate's ability to do the job.