

MUNICIPAL PERSONNEL REPORT: Recruiting and Selecting Management and Professional Personnel

Prepared and Updated by
Warren Nevad, Management Consultant
August 2008

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE 
MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

In cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League



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The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) was created in 1949 by the state legislature to enhance the quality of government in Tennessee municipalities. An agency of the University of Tennessee Institute for Public Service, MTAS works in cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League and affiliated organizations to assist municipal officials.

By sharing information, responding to client requests, and anticipating the ever-changing municipal government environment, MTAS promotes better local government and helps cities develop and sustain effective management and leadership.

MTAS offers assistance in areas such as accounting and finance, administration and personnel, fire, public works,

law, ordinance codification, and water and wastewater management. MTAS houses a comprehensive library and publishes scores of documents annually.

MTAS provides one copy of our publications free of charge to each Tennessee municipality, county and department of state and federal government. There is a \$10 charge for additional copies of "Municipal Personnel Report: Recruiting and Selecting Management and Professional Personnel."

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this publication is to provide Tennessee local governments with basic information and a general framework for recruiting and selecting managerial and professional personnel. Because a community's success and growth depend on its having competent managers and department heads, selecting the right candidate can be extremely challenging. Following the basic suggestions and guidelines in this publication can help ensure that hiring decisions are made only after weighing the possible alternatives and outcomes. While this publication focuses on hiring a public works director, similar processes can be used for hiring city attorneys, city managers, department heads and other key personnel.

Cities perform public services, and providing high quality service requires high quality people. People are not only your most expensive organizational investment, they also are the most critical. A city must be willing to "pay the price" to select the personnel who provide a match to the community's needs. Paying the price means more than just finding the dollars necessary to hire the best people. It also means knowing how to recruit and select the best people while meeting all appropriate state and federal labor regulations. Examples of federal labor legislation include Title VI, the

Americans With Disabilities Act and the Age and Discrimination Employment Act. This report can assist city officials with this important task.

The recruitment and selection process is exceptionally important because of its consequences. A hiring decision sets many wheels in motion. Every hiring decision impacts the overall performance of the organization, and hiring the wrong person can be extremely costly. If the recruitment and selection process is confused and unorganized, potential qualified candidates may be discouraged from submitting their names for consideration. Following the steps outlined in this report, along with appropriate personnel and federal laws, will reduce the chances of hiring the wrong management and professional candidates.

The University of Tennessee (UT) Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) has assisted many Tennessee cities in recruiting and selecting management-level employees and continues to offer that service. We hope this report will enable more cities to follow a sound, systematic approach in future recruitments. This report is not an ironclad guarantee for success, but following it will increase the likelihood of a satisfactory selection decision.



CUSTOMIZING YOUR RECRUITMENT SELECTION PROCESS

Hiring personnel is probably the most important function city officials will ever fulfill during their tenure. Consider the decisions and actions that the person you hire is going to generate and how those decisions and actions will affect your organization and your community. A sound recruitment and selection process should never use shortcuts. It is worth the time and effort required to do it correctly. A sound, systematic and fair recruiting and selection process also is an effective safeguard against potential challenges by rejected applicants.

When you have successfully created a mental picture of the new employee performing the job you want accomplished, you are ready to customize the job. Customizing means thinking through and writing down the specific characteristics that you desire. The word “specific” is key. When you customize, you are putting the mental picture into words.

Customizing the job provides you with a valuable working tool called the **job design profile**. This also is referred to as a job analysis.

The job design profile is a guide used as a standard to evaluate the candidates who apply for the position. It also is the basis for the job description, which is discussed in the next chapter. Its contents may vary depending upon the position, but it always provides an outline of the qualities, skills, and characteristics that you, as the person conducting the hiring, are looking for in the new employee.

Let’s look at an example:

You need to hire a department head. The city’s public works director is preparing to retire, and you must hire a qualified replacement as soon as possible. You have given it a lot of thought. You may need to revise the job description.

Begin by writing a description of the job as you see it. Ask yourself the question “What is the public works director’s job?” Be as specific and complete as you can.

Second, decide on and note the type and extent of education and experience required and desired. Is a bachelor’s degree required or a master’s degree? Or, are either desired but not required? Do you want the new person to have a degree in a specific educational area, for example, engineering or public administration? How much practical public works experience should the person have? State this in terms of years and the kind of experience required or desired (for example, more than 10 years as an assistant director or at least five years as a director in a community of at least 5,000 population).

Third, write down the five most important personal descriptive characteristics that you want the new public works director to have, and rank them. For example:

- Confident decision maker
- Innovative in creating new ideas
- Outgoing personality
- Practical problem solver
- Tactful in addressing adverse groups

Here, you are putting the picture into words.

Fourth, list the five most important professional characteristics you want the new public works director to have, and rank them. For example:

- Engineering skills
- Productivity oriented
- Results oriented
- Communication skills



In developing this list you must match characteristics to the written description that you have already prepared. Ask yourself, “Are these the characteristics needed to do the job that I want done the way that I want it?”

Fifth, write down the five most important job challenges or targets that you expect the new director to overcome and accomplish, and rank them. For example:

- Reorganize the department
- Develop a five-year street improvement program
- Improve employee productivity
- Be responsive to citizen requests
- Reduce the cost of garbage collection

Taken together these items are the job design profile. Sample blank and completed job design profiles follow.



PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

(Number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 the five most important professional characteristics you want the new director to have.)

Administrative Skills	1	People Oriented	
Analytical Skills		Planning Skills	4
Communication Skills	5	Policy Development Skills	
Cost Conscious		Productivity Oriented	
Democratic Decision Maker		Public Relations Skills	
Detail Oriented		Quality Conscious	3
Independent Decision Maker		Results Oriented	
Objective		Team Player	
Organization Skills		Technically Oriented	
Engineering Skills	2	Other	
Business Minded			

COMMENT: _____

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

(Number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 the five most important personal characteristics you want the new director to have.)

Alert		Mature	
Ambitious		Open	
Assertive		Other	
Cautious		Outgoing	
Confident		Patient	
Conservative		Persistent	
Considerate		Practical	
Cooperative	3	Prompt	
Creative		Reliable	2
Decisive		Resourceful	
Deliberate		Sensitive	
Friendly		Stable	
Flexible	5	Tactful	
Forthright		Tolerant	
Honest	1	Unprejudiced	
Humble		Versatile	
Innovative	4	Well Organized	
Intellectual		Other	



COMMENT: _____

CRITICAL JOB TARGETS

List the five most important challenges or job targets the new public works director will face. For example, develop a five-year street improvement program, reorganize the department, improve employee productivity, etc.

1. Downtown redevelopment program: _____

2. Street repaving schedule: _____

3. Reorganize the public works department and choose assistant director: _____

4. Work with the parks and recreation department in developing new mowing schedules and cleanup of ball fields and parks: _____

5. Make plans to relocate the equipment/vehicle storage area to a new facility within the next three years: _____

COMMENT: _____



PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

(Number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 the five most important professional characteristics you want the new director to have.)

Administrative Skills	_____	People Oriented	_____
Analytical Skills	_____	Planning Skills	_____
Communication Skills	_____	Policy Development Skills	_____
Cost Conscious	_____	Productivity Oriented	_____
Democratic Decision Maker	_____	Public Relations Skills	_____
Detail Oriented	_____	Quality Conscious	_____
Independent Decision Maker	_____	Results Oriented	_____
Objective	_____	Team Player	_____
Organization Skills	_____	Technically Oriented	_____
Engineering Skills	_____	Other	_____
Business Minded	_____		

COMMENT: _____

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

(Number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 the five most important personal characteristics you want the new director to have.)

Alert	_____	Mature	_____
Ambitious	_____	Open	_____
Assertive	_____	Other	_____
Cautious	_____	Outgoing	_____
Confident	_____	Patient	_____
Conservative	_____	Persistent	_____
Considerate	_____	Practical	_____
Cooperative	_____	Prompt	_____
Creative	_____	Reliable	_____
Decisive	_____	Resourceful	_____
Deliberate	_____	Sensitive	_____
Friendly	_____	Stable	_____
Flexible	_____	Tactful	_____
Forthright	_____	Tolerant	_____
Honest	_____	Unprejudiced	_____
Humble	_____	Versatile	_____
Innovative	_____	Well Organized	_____
Intellectual	_____	Other	_____



COMMENT: _____

CRITICAL JOB TARGETS

List the five most important challenges or job targets the new public works director will face. For example, develop a five-year street improvement program, reorganize the department, improve employee productivity, etc.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

COMMENT: _____



JOB DESCRIPTION

The emphasis in effective recruiting should always be on quality. A truckload of mediocre applicants will not accomplish the goal of finding the single candidate that best fits your job design profile.

The job design profile is an important working tool in recruitment and selection. It will be used and referred to at several points during the process. Writing the job description is the first practical use of the information generated through the job design profile; the next step is the first application.

The job description is the principal means for conveying to the applicant pool your expectations and requirements for the job. It should be well organized and understandable. An acceptable format would include information presented within categories such as:

- General definition and nature of the job
- Essential duties and work performed
- Required knowledge and skills
- Desired qualifications
- Special requirements

The job description must meet American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for reasonable accommodations for the position. Much of the information you included in the job description will be derived from the job design profile. An example of a job description for public works director is included in this chapter.

Once the job description has been developed, it can be used as a recruitment tool. Potential applicants typically are recruited through two methods — advertisement and personal contact

An accurate and complete job description is essential for both methods. It is, in a real sense, an advertising technique and, at the same time, a professionally acceptable means for you to communicate with potential applicants.

EXHIBIT 3: POSITION OF PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

JOB DESCRIPTION

General Definition and Nature of Job:

The public works director is appointed by and reports to the city manager. This is a department head level position, one of six within the city's organizational structure. The director has primary responsibility for the organization, operation and overall performance of the department. This specifically includes the department and administration of the departmental budget and the supervision of all department employees. Department functions include engineering, solid waste management, water and sewer utilities, streets and public works construction activities.

Independent judgment is used according to the situation, and different courses of action must be taken to complete the department tasks. Work is performed in all kinds of weather conditions.

Essential Duties and Work Performed:

- Oversees budgetary operations and prepares budgets as required
- Promulgates regulations to ensure proper organization and use of personnel
- Plans and directs activities of the public works department
- Performs administrative activities of the public works department
- Coordinates formal and on-the-job training programs for recruits and personnel development
- Keeps records and prepares reports including personnel reports
- Develops and recommends policy options and alternatives for consideration by the city manager and the city council



Required Knowledge and Skills:

- Knowledge of public works operations, including construction, engineering, maintenance, office and business procedures
- Ability to plan, organize, schedule, coordinate and direct public works functions, including streets, solid waste, water and sewer utilities and engineering
- Knowledge of and experience in the application of management and supervisory principles and practices as applied to municipal government
- Knowledge of and experience in municipal procedures relating to finance, personnel, purchasing, office operations, risk management and public relations
- Knowledge of and experience in the management of occupational hazards and safety precautions
- Knowledge of the principles and practices of engineering and construction, particularly as applied to municipal functions
- Ability to efficiently prepare and maintain thorough and accurate reports and records
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with the public, news media, employees, external agencies and organizations, the city manager and the city council

Desired Qualifications:

- Graduation from a four-year college with major course work in engineering, public works, business administration, or public administration, master's degree or engineering license preferred
- Demonstrated management or high level administrative experience
- Progressively responsible experience in public works
- Must pass physical and drug screen
- Valid Tennessee driver's license

Special Qualifications/Requirements:

The public works director is expected to be

an effective administrator concerned about productivity and quality performance. The public works director must bring to the job and at all times maintain a sense of objectivity and a business-minded approach. It is essential that the public works director be service oriented.

RECRUITING

The best outlets in which to advertise often are dictated by the particular position you are seeking to fill. It is important that you target the most productive sources. For management- and professional-level positions, using the newsletters and trade journals of appropriate professional groups are essential for productive searches. *Tennessee Town & City* and the publications of other municipal leagues are helpful sources. A partial list of sources is in Appendix A. Advertising in the classified section of local or regional newspapers also is common. Advertising in widely circulated publications is likely to prompt additional applications, although many will lack desired levels of education and experience. In addition, opportunities exist to advertise on various Web sites, including the municipality's own site. The city must determine how broadly or narrowly it wishes to advertise.

Important elements to consider including in the advertisement are:

- A brief, attractive description of the city or town, including population, and an overview of the organization, including number of employees and budget
- Minimum requirements for experience and education
- A salary range, which may include "commensurate with experience"
- An application deadline of no fewer than three weeks and no more than eight weeks from the date of the ad
- A location to which applications should be submitted



The best candidates for the job may not respond to an advertisement, or they may never see it. Because good prospects may not be actively looking for a new job, do not rely exclusively on advertising to generate all applicants. You also need to ask others for suggestions. Within a particular profession, it is possible to secure the names of individuals who are highly respected and who may fit the job design profile you have developed. This can be accomplished by securing a directory of the appropriate professional association and making direct contact with current officers and members.

Some local governments hire the services of an executive search firm, often referred to as a headhunter, to enhance the applicant pool. While often effective, executive search firms can be expensive. Local governments must weigh the costs and benefits of using an executive search firm with the overall criteria established for the position to determine if outside assistance is needed and the extra expense is justified.

Remember not to be shy about inquiring and making personal contact. There is nothing improper or unethical about informing people of employment opportunities. It is up to the individual to decide if he or she is interested enough to apply.

As an equal opportunity employer, make every effort to attract qualified minority candidates. Minority recruitment is an obligation and a beneficial practice to promote community diversity.

One final recruitment tip — Look right under your nose. The best qualified person may already be working for you.

EXHIBIT 4: JOB ADVERTISEMENT

THE CITY OF _____, TENNESSEE

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

The public works director has primary responsibility for the organization, operation and overall performance of the public works department. Department functions include engineering, water and sewer utilities, solid waste management, streets and public works construction.

The public works director must be an effective administrator, business minded, and productivity and service oriented. The director should have a college degree. A masters degree in public administration or business administration is preferred. The director must have demonstrated management capabilities, with progressively responsible experience in the area of public works administration preferred.

The public works department has an annual operating budget of \$2.5 million. It has 25 full-time employees. The public works director is appointed by and reports to the city manager.

Salary Range: \$55,000 - \$70,000

Starting Salary: \$55,000 - \$60,000 depending upon qualifications.

Send complete resume to:

Deadline for receipt of resumes:

EOE



REVIEWING RESUMES

It is not uncommon for a good recruitment effort to generate 40 or more applications for a professional position. It is recommended that you acknowledge the receipt of each application. We have developed a **resume checklist** in this section that should be used as a tool to screen resumes by assigning a score to each. Criteria for reviewing and scoring resumes should include experience, education, quality and clarity of resume, and length of time in previous positions as related to the job design.

A resume is essentially a personal advertisement. It may be accurate and complete, or it may be exaggerated or deceptive. You decide as you sort through and decode what is before you. As you review each resume with your job design profile in mind, make notations and comments opposite each requirement or characteristic. In addition, we recommend requiring each applicant to complete your standard employment application.

As you review each resume, there are other considerations to keep in mind. There are two areas in particular that will require your conscious attention:

- **Employment history.** Are there gaps in employment? Has the candidate served a reasonable period of time in each job? Is the chronology consistent?
- **Accomplishments.** Experience is fine, but did the candidate accomplish the kinds of things you want accomplished? This is where resumes most often reflect exaggerated claims.

Narrowing the Field

Once you have completed your review of resumes and standard application forms, you are prepared to make some judgments. You will be able to assign applicants to one of three categories:

- Those who do not fit the job design profile (inactive)

- Those who do fit the job design profile (active)
- Those who are questionable

Set aside the resumes of candidates who do not fit the job design profile. Temporarily, also set aside the resumes of candidates who do meet the job design profile. For the moment focus on the questionables.

What you are attempting to determine is which, if any, of the questionable candidates should receive further consideration. To do that, you need additional information, and the best way to secure that information is through a telephone interview. Make a list of the questions and the items on which you need clarification before you make the phone call. When you speak to the applicant, make it clear that the reason for the call is to ensure that you have complete and accurate information to use for evaluation purposes. Record the new information on the resume checklist found later in this section. The summary of the scores can be posted on a screening worksheet, a sample of which also is located in this section.

After assessing the new information, assign each of the previously questionable applicants to either the active or inactive category. Candidates who will not be considered further should be advised at this time.

Now, take the paperwork for the candidates in the active category, and review it thoroughly once again. These are the applicants you will be considering further.



EXHIBIT 5: RESUME CHECKLIST

POSITION OF PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR RESUME CHECKLIST

Applicant Name: _____

Rater Name: _____

Use the following scale:

OS: Outstanding (5) VG: Very Good (4) G: Good (3) F: Fair (2) P: Poor (1)

(Note: there are 50 possible points)

1. Do the resume and cover letter suggest real interest in the position?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Has the applicant had experience with the variety of services delivered by the city's public works department?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Has the applicant had experience working in a local government of comparable size, including a comparable staff size and budget?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Has the applicant worked in a similar geographic area? Is the applicant likely to be comfortable with the community?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Has the applicant had broad administrative and supervisory authority in public works?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Has the applicant had experience working with citizen groups and appointed boards or commissions?	1	2	3	4	5
7. What is the applicant's educational background?	1	2	3	4	5
8. Does the applicant have good tenure with most previous employers?	1	2	3	4	5
9. Does the applicant show interest in continuing professional development by participating in training programs and professional organizations?	1	2	3	4	5
10. Does the applicant's employment history suggest a pattern of broad experience and increasing responsibility?	1	2	3	4	5

Total Score: _____

OVERALL RATING

☐ OS = Outstanding

☐ VG = Very Good

☐ G = Good

☐ F = Fair

☐ P = Poor



INTERVIEWING

Preparing to Interview

A major milestone in the recruitment and selection process is reached when you have decided who you will interview. Prior to conducting interviews, there is one remaining procedure that you may wish to consider using — the **pre-interview questionnaire**.

The pre-interview questionnaire is a series of questions that are pertinent to the position for which you are recruiting. It has two purposes:

1. To obtain insight into the candidate's knowledge and understanding on subjects that are important to the job and the organization
2. To determine the candidate's ability to communicate in writing

Both of the above are important in evaluating candidates for managerial and professional positions.

The pre-interview questionnaire should be returned by each candidate well in advance of the interview date, so that each interviewer has an opportunity to review it and complete the **pre-interview assessment** form. (A sample pre-interview assessment form is located at the end of this chapter.) The assessment form should be completed and at hand when you interview the candidate. You may desire to audiotape or videotape the interview.

In preparing for the interview you may discover that some of the candidates you are considering have decided not to pursue the opportunity. There are a number of legitimate reasons why this may happen. Accepting another position, second thoughts about leaving the current job, or reaching a conclusion that this is just not the right move are not uncommon.

In deciding how many candidates to interview, you must be guided in part by budget and time constraints. Time and money have a way of helping make decisions. There is no magic number. Be guided

by the specific situation that confronts you, and do not force the situation by striving for a particular number. Interviewing three candidates that you really feel good about is better than interviewing five against your better judgment.

You will need to decide who will be doing the interviewing for your organization. Your charter may dictate who will do the hiring for the position. For a management or professional position, it is a good idea for more than one person to participate. Sometimes a screening committee or a selection committee approach makes sense. Often it may be the governing body itself. What's important is to include some perceptive questioners and listeners. The interview is an important event leading to a big decision. You are about to do some heavy-duty comparison shopping.

It is necessary that you enter the interview with a clear plan and specific objectives. At a minimum, observe these basic principles:

- Know at the outset how the interview will be conducted and the kind of information you want to secure from each candidate
- Communicate, in general terms, with each candidate prior to the interview about the information you will be seeking
- Approach the interview as a two-way street, recognizing that the candidates also are interviewing you
- Prepare yourself psychologically to manage and control the interview
- Prepare in advance a list of basic questions that will be directed to each candidate
- Prepare in advance an evaluation form to be used by those doing the interviewing for your organization

The kinds of questions asked in the interview are important, and careful consideration should be given



to the way they are worded and asked. Appendix F contains a sample list of interview questions. For a professional management-level position, these are some of the areas that you should evaluate in the interview:

- Demonstrated leadership potential
- Demonstrated management potential
- Demonstrated knowledge of departmental operations
- Ability to work with people and groups
- Demonstration of good judgment and common sense
- Demonstrated ability to relate as a team player

- Demonstrated past performance
- Oral communication skills
- Extent to which the individual is goal directed
- Extent to which the individual is service oriented

These areas are general categories within which specific questions are developed and asked. All candidates should be asked the same questions. The emphasis and importance placed on each area will vary depending upon the needs and priorities of the position and the organization.

EXHIBIT 7: SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER WITH ATTACHED QUESTIONNAIRE

Date

Dear Public Works Director Candidate:

Thank you for applying for the position of public works director for the city of (name), Tennessee. We have received many applications for this position.

Of the applications we received, there are approximately (#) at which we would like to look closer. Your application is one of these. In order to find out more about you and your management style, we have enclosed a list of six questions we would like you to answer and return to us no later than (date). Based on these responses, we will select a small number of applicants whom we would like to bring to (city name) to interview.

Simply write or type your responses in the space provided, and please feel free to call if you have any questions.

In the meantime, I want to thank you again for your interest in the position of public works director. We look forward to receiving your responses so that we can learn more about you.

Sincerely,

City Manager

Encl: Public Works Applicant Questionnaire



EXHIBIT 8: APPLICANT QUESTIONNAIRE

TOWN OF ANYWHERE: PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR APPLICANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer in the space provided.

1. How does this position relate to your long-term goals?

2. What would you do if the city council adopted a policy with which you disagreed?

3. What aspect(s) of your education and experience prepares you to be a department head of this organization?

4. Describe the leadership responsibilities and opportunities inherent in this position?

5. What special qualifications do you have that would enhance your potential for success in this position?

6. Describe your management philosophy and style.



EXHIBIT 9: PRE-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT

NAME OF CANDIDATE: _____

KEY

OS: Outstanding (5) VG: Very Good (4) G: Good (3) F: Fair (2) P: Poor (1)

1. How well do the candidate's qualifications meet the job requirements?
 - A. B.S./B.A. in engineering, business administration, or public administration
 - B. Master's degree or engineering license
 - C. Demonstrated management experience
 - D. Progressively responsible experience in a similar type organization
2. Work History: Extent to which the candidate's work experience can be applied to this position.
3. Communication skills (written).
4. Community oriented.

OVERALL RATING _____



Conducting the Interview

It is important to emphasize the importance of conducting each interview in a fair and equitable manner. It is not possible to develop identical interview situations, but every effort should be made to ensure a basic consistency in the interview format. This does not mean that concerns specific to a particular candidate cannot or should not be pursued. The interview is exactly the right time to do that.

What are the basic goals of interviewing for management and professional positions? There are two, and they must be kept uppermost in mind at all times:

1. To determine if the candidate has the technical competence, experience, and skills to do the job you want done, in the way you want it done
2. To determine if the candidate has the personal qualities and characteristics that fit the needs of the organization and the community

The interview begins by you welcoming the candidate and making him or her feel comfortable. Open the interview by highlighting the job description and reviewing with the candidates the salient features of their resumes. Allow and encourage candidates to tell you about themselves.

Keep in mind that the interview is a two-way street. Both parties are buyers and both are sellers. As the potential employer, you must be prepared to answer legitimate questions. If a candidate does not ask you any questions, you have good reason to be concerned about that candidate's seriousness. Allow at least one-third of the total interview time for the candidate's questions and for your responses.

The uppermost concern of most job candidates is "Is this the right job for me?" The questions directed to you and the answers you give are significant because they will help the candidate make a decision on that most important of questions. In answering, be honest and straightforward. Anything short of

honesty is a disservice to your own organization and grossly unfair to the candidate. Answering the question "Is this the right job for me?" is as important to you as it is to the candidate.

If you are an inexperienced interviewer, there are a number of common pitfalls that you should be aware of and avoid. These include:

- Asking leading questions
- Making decisions too early in the interview
- Failing to properly relate questions and answers to job requirements (the job description)
- Talking too much and listening too little. The candidate should do at least 75 percent of the talking
- Failing to manage the interview. Keep it on track and under control
- Allowing one factor, positive or negative, to exert undue influence. Try to consider the person within the total framework of his personality and professional competency
- Failing to probe and ask follow-up questions when a response is incomplete or confusing
- Judging the candidate solely on personality

Legal Aspects of Advertising and Interviewing

MTAS has prepared comprehensive reports on legal concerns and questions related to hiring. The first publication is titled *Legal Considerations Involved in the Hiring Decision or Do I Really Have to Hire That Person?* by Sidney D. Hemsley, MTAS senior legal consultant. The second publication is *Interviewing and the Law* by Richard L. Stokes, MTAS municipal human resource management consultant. These publications should be consulted whenever you are considering interviewing and hiring any employee. Chapter IV of *Legal Considerations Involved in the Hiring Decision* is presented in Appendix B. *Interviewing and the Law* is presented in Appendix C.

During the interview do everything you can to get the whole story, the big picture and all the basic



questions answered to your satisfaction. At the conclusion of the interview complete the interview evaluation form.

It is not unusual that more than one interview with the same candidate may be necessary or desirable. As you continue to narrow the field and to really zero in on one or two applicants, a second or third

interview can be productive and decisive. Do what is necessary to completely achieve the two primary objectives of the interview.

Do not ask questions regarding religion, ethnicity, health, marital status, dependents or politics. Refer to the previously mentioned publications for more information.

EXHIBIT 10: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND EVALUATION FORM

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND EVALUATION FORM Public Works Director

1. What interests you most about the position?
2. What are your personal and professional strengths?
3. Why do you want to leave your present job?
4. What aspects of this job would you most enjoy?
5. Tell us about some major accomplishments you have achieved in your present position.
6. In your view, what is the most important aspect of this job?
7. What qualifies you to manage a department with ____ employees and an operating budget of \$_____ million?
8. What are your personal and professional goals?
9. How would you describe your own personality?
10. If we walked up and down Main Street of the community you now serve, what would the business community and the public tell us about you?
11. What do your subordinates think of you?
12. What are the characteristics you look for when hiring people?
13. Have you terminated employees?
14. How would you go about terminating a key employee?
15. Describe your management philosophy and style.



EVALUATING

Recording Information and Impressions

What should happen at the conclusion of an interview? The most important immediate step is to record, while it is fresh in your mind, information and impressions that you obtained during the interview. During an interview session with more than one interviewer, you should immediately record your information while the other interviewer(s) are asking questions.

To record information on and impressions of each candidate at the conclusion of the interview, it is suggested that you use a simple form such as the **interview assessment form** included in this chapter. This form provides a 10-point checklist and space for your personal comments.

Completion of the interview assessment form is the first post-interview step in moving toward a selection decision. It is the next item in a series that began with construction of the job design profile. Then there was the job description, the job advertisement, the resume checklist, the pre-interview questionnaire and pre-interview assessment form, the interview questions and now the interview assessment form. All of these are part of the same cloth. They represent progressive steps in the process. Each is a working tool to be used at a different stage.

The post-interview assessment provides an opportunity to rank the candidate in the major areas of concern and incorporates the rankings that were made on the pre-interview assessment form in this chapter.

Through a thorough consideration of all written and verbal communication, you will finally achieve a preliminary ranking of candidates. In some situations, there will be a clear preference. In other situations, follow-up interviews may be required to arrive at first, second and third preferences.



EXHIBIT 11: INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT

NAME OF CANDIDATE: _____

	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Pre-interview rating					
2. Good judgment and common sense					
3. Oral communication skills					
4. Team player					
5. Goal oriented					
6. Service oriented					
7. Ability to work with people and groups					
8. Knowledge of public works operations					
9. Potential for effective management					
10. Leadership potential					
OVERALL RATING					



Assessment Centers

The assessment center is an option available for use in the selection process. An assessment center places applicants in situations where they role play and participate in other exercises that help demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) required for the job. The benefit of the assessment center is that the selection panel is able to learn more about the management style of the candidate in the role for which he or she is interviewing. Elements of the candidate's style, demeanor and decision-making skills are exposed. This can allow the selection panel to compare each candidate against a description of the specific competencies desired for the ideal manager.

There are cautions for using assessment centers. Assessment centers use valid and reliable testing methods, but they are expensive, take considerable preparation time, demand extensive time of assessors and candidates, and should be conducted only by trained professionals with solid references and credentials.

Assessment centers attempt to simulate actual job situations and evaluate behavior through a series of job-related exercises. The principle is that behaviors displayed by a candidate during the exercises also can be expected in on-the-job performance. You can receive additional information on the assessment center approach from MTAS.

Background Investigation/Reference Checks

It is absolutely essential that a careful and thorough verification of the preferred candidate's personal and professional background be made before a final selection decision is made. Under current circumstances, this may be a very difficult task. Because of potential liability, verifying anything more than employment dates can be a challenge. Verification should also include academic credentials and credit reports if positions involve money or property. The applicant must sign a release form if

you will be performing a background check. If you use a credit report, you must abide by the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

You may already have made some preliminary checks when you were considering which candidates you would invite to interview. Usually a candidate will either include a list of references on the resume or will indicate that references are available upon request. It is now time to do some serious checking. Reference checks should not be restricted to just those references provided by the candidate. Keep in mind that the candidate will provide the names of individuals who will give favorable references.

The purpose of background checks is to make sure that you touch third base on your way home. It should not be a negative, "let's see if we can dig up some dirt" approach. Rather, it should be viewed as one additional fact-finding procedure that will let you develop a complete and realistic assessment of the candidate. The way to do that is to communicate with the right people and induce their responses to the right questions. Before doing so, however, tell the candidate that this will be the next step. Make sure the candidate is ready and willing to undergo this scrutiny.

Who are the right references? Usually, they are current and prior supervisors, personnel directors and fellow workers. It is recommended that you use the references provided by the candidate to develop a network of further references.

Speaking with references is similar to interviewing the candidate. You observe the same principles and procedures in questioning. Avoid the same common pitfalls, and heed the same legal constraints regarding age, race, religion, disabilities and marital status.



What are the right questions? Whatever is most important to you that is job related. Are there things you are unclear on or uncertain about? Satisfy yourself before making a decision. At the very least, cover the key items on the job description. Do not ask questions out of curiosity.

In making reference and background contacts, you may write a letter, pick up the phone or make a personal visit. You are likely to secure a more complete and in-depth response through verbal communication. Many people are bothered by the idea of expressing a negative opinion in writing. Be probing, and allow your contacts ample

opportunity to be long winded. Look for similarities and differences in the comments you receive. Both are important. If one of your sources brings up something that you hadn't previously heard, and it is important, do not hesitate to contact someone with whom you have already spoken.

When you have finished checking and re-checking and have recorded the results, you should be in a good position to make a final selection decision. Send appropriate letters of rejection to all applicants for your position opening. A sample rejection letter follows.

EXHIBIT 12: SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP REJECTION LETTER

Date

Dear Public Works Director Candidate:

Thank you for applying for the position of public works director for the city of (name), Tennessee. We have received many applications for this position and have spent considerable time and effort reviewing the credentials offered by our applicants. After careful consideration, we have decided not to pursue employment opportunities with you.

We sincerely wish you the best of luck in your current position and commend you on your professionalism exhibited during this selection process. In the meantime, I want to express our gratitude for your interest in the position of public works director. We look forward to your continued success.

Sincerely,

City Manager



HIRING

All that remains is to hire the person whom your evaluation has determined to be the most qualified and suitable candidate. This involves, among other things, reaching agreement on salary, benefits and conditions of employment. That may sound a little scary, but it is usually a pleasant, business-like experience.

In your job advertisement, you indicated a salary range for the position. The reason for doing that was to save potential applicants unnecessary time and effort. You can properly assume that individuals who applied are willing to go to work for a salary that falls within the advertised pay range. If it is your intent to pay the starting rate, then do not advertise a range.

In the job advertisement you may also have indicated a maximum starting rate. That should make things go even smoother, but it does not mean there will not be a little give and take, a bit of honest, old-fashioned trying to get the best deal possible. Expect some of that because it is human nature. Just remember that your job is to keep the magic number at a level that is fair and within the salary parameters that have been established.

Benefits and conditions of employment for positions in city government are usually uniform and consistent for employees of the same classification, for example, department heads. This is generally understood, but to affirm that fact, many organizations provide this information to applicants prior to interviewing. It is recommended that you do so.

There are a few items other than salary that may require negotiation. Starting date is one. Another is moving expenses. Still another is use of an automobile. Go over the parameters of the job one final time with the person you are hiring so that there is absolutely no misunderstanding. This

also is the time to communicate any expectations or preferences that were not thoroughly covered during the interview or subsequent conversations.

When you have verbally covered all of the above items to the satisfaction of the candidate and yourself, put it all in a written, formal job offer letter, and request a reply from the candidate in writing. Post-offer drug testing/physical examination may be acceptable at this point.

Finally, make an effort to really welcome your new employee. Take the time to arrange introductions with other staff members. Provide an appropriate orientation to the job, the organization and the community. Doing so will enable the new employee to be productive for you sooner.

HOW MTAS CAN HELP

The recruitment and selection process involves a variety of steps and activities that must be performed in a timely and orderly manner. Because the hiring decision is so important to the organization and the community, a city may wish to request project assistance from MTAS.

MTAS can help in a variety of ways ranging from coordinating the total process to performing a single task. We can, for example, assist in the preparation of the job design profile, the job description or the job advertisement. We also can administer the pre-interview questionnaire or contact references on behalf of your city.

In short, the scope of MTAS's services in the recruitment and selection of management and professional employees can be tailored to the needs and preferences of each city. MTAS also can arrange an assessment center.



APPENDIX A

ADVERTISING SOURCES FOR RECRUITING MANAGERIAL AND PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL

National Organizations

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

1120 G Street, N.W., Ste. 700
Washington, D.C. 20005-3885
Phone: (202) 393-7878
Web site: <http://www.aspanet.org>
Publication: *Public Administration Times*

INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

777 N. Capitol St., N.E., Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20002-4201
Phone (202) 289-4262
Web site: <http://www.icma.org>
Publication: *ICMA Newsletter*

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

1617 Duke Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Phone: (703) 549-7100
Web site: <http://www.ipma-hr.org>
Publication: *IPMA News*

GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF UNITED STATES AND CANADA

180 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60601
Phone: (312) 977-9700
Web site: <http://www.gfoa.org>
Publication: *GFOA Newsletter*

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

515 N. Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Phone: (703) 836-6767
Web site: <http://www.theiacp.org>
Publication: *Police Chief: The Professional Voice
of Law Enforcement*

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

4025 Fair Ridge Drive
Fairfax, Virginia 22033-2868
Phone: (703) 273-0911
Web site: <http://www.ichiefs.org>
Publication: *ICHIEFS On Scene*

NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

1 Batterymarch Park
P.O. Box 9101
Quincy, Massachusetts 02269-9101
Phone: (617) 770-3000
Web site: <http://www.nfpa.org>
Publication: *Fire News*

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

1801 Alexander Bell Drive
Reston, Virginia 20191-4400
Phone: (703) 295-6300
Web site: <http://www.asce.org>
Publication: *Civil Engineering*

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

440 First Street, N.W., Ste. 800
Washington, D.C. 20001
Phone: (202) 393-6226
Web site: <http://www.naco.org>
Publication: *County News*

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS & TOWNSHIPS

444 N. Capitol St., N.W.
Suite 208
Washington, D.C. 20001
Phone: (202) 624-3550
Web site: <http://www.natat.org>
Publication: *NATAT's Reporter*



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004-1763
Phone: (202) 626-3000
Web site: <http://www.nlc.org>
Publication: *Nation's Cities Weekly*

Leagues of Municipalities

ALABAMA LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES

P.O. Box 1270
Montgomery, Alabama 36102
Phone: (334) 262-2566
Web site: <http://www.alalm.org>
Publication: *Alabama Municipal Journal*

ARKANSAS MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

301 West 2nd
North Little Rock, Arkansas 72115
Phone: (501) 374-3484
Web site: <http://www.arml.org>
Publication: *City & Town*

FLORIDA LEAGUE OF CITIES

301 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32302
Phone: (850) 222-9684
Web site: <http://www.flcities.com>
Publication: *Quality Cities*

GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

201 Pryor Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Phone: (404) 688-0472
Web site: <http://www.gmanet.com>
Publication: *Urban Georgia*

KENTUCKY MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

101 East Vine Street, Ste. 600
Lexington, Kentucky 40507-3700
Phone: (859) 323-3700
Web site: <http://www.klc.org>
Publication: *The Kentucky City*

MISSISSIPPI MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

600 East Amite St., Ste. 104
Jackson, Mississippi 39201
Phone: (601) 353-5854
Web site: <http://www.mmlonline.com>
Publication: *Mississippi Municipalities*

MISSOURI MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

1727 Southridge Dr.
Jefferson City, Missouri 65109
Phone: (573) 635-9134
Web site: <http://www.mocities.com>
Publication: *Missouri Municipal Review*

NORTH CAROLINA LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES

P.O. Box 3069
Raleigh, North Carolina 27602-3069
Phone: (919) 715-4000
Web site: <http://www.nclm.org>
Publication: *Southern City*

MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

P.O. Box 12109
Columbia, South Carolina 29211
Phone: (803) 799-9574
Web site: <http://masc.state.sc.us>
Publication: *Uptown*

TENNESSEE MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

226 Capitol Boulevard
Room 710
Nashville, Tennessee 37219-1894
Phone: (615) 255-6416
Web site: <http://www.tml1.org>
Publication: *Tennessee Town & City*

VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

P.O. Box 12164
Richmond, Virginia 23241
Phone: (804) 649-8471
Web site: <http://www.vml.org>



Other Sources

TENNESSEE COUNTY SERVICES ASSOCIATION

226 Capitol Boulevard Building, Ste. 700

Nashville, Tennessee 37219

Phone: (615) 532-3767

Publication: *Tennessee County News*

PUBLIC WORKS JOURNAL CORP.

200 South Broad Street

Ridgewood, New Jersey 07451

Phone: (201) 445-5800

Publication: *Public Works*

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS, INC.

6255 Barfield Road

Atlanta, Georgia 30328

Phone: (404) 256-9800

Publication: *American City & County*



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