

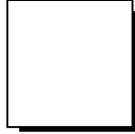


Interview Skills for Supervisors: Finding the Best Match

Participant Guide



February 3, 2010



Welcome

Welcome to this TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) training event. We are excited that you will be joining us today for *Interview Skill for Supervisors: Finding the Best Match*, and we look forward to helping you to get as much out of this time as possible.

Your participation is an important part of this class. If you have a question, don't hesitate to ask. There are probably several others in the class who have the same question – you might as well be the one to ask. It is our goal that you leave class today with no unanswered questions.

How to Interact with the Instructor

We encourage you to ask questions and share your comments with the instructors throughout this TELNPS course.

If you were physically in the classroom with the instructor, you would raise your hand to let her/him know you had a question or comment. Then you would wait for the instructor to recognize you and ask for your question. We are all familiar with that “protocol” for asking questions or making comments.

With TELNPS courses there is also a “protocol” to follow to ensure that you can easily ask questions and others can participate as well. It may seem a little strange at first asking a question of a

TV monitor. Remember, it is the instructor you are interacting with and not the monitor. As you ask more questions and participate in more TELNPS courses, you will soon be focusing only on the content of your question and not the equipment you are using to ask it.

As part of the TEL station equipment at your location, there are several push-to-talk microphones. Depending on the number of students at your location, you may have one directly in front of you or you may be sharing one with other students at your table.

When you have a question, press and hold down the push-to-talk button, maintaining a distance of 12-18 inches, and say,

“Excuse me [instructor’s first name], this is [your first name]

at [your location]. I have a question (or I have a comment).”

Then release the push-to-talk button. This is important.

Until you release the button, you will not be able to hear the instructor.

The instructor will acknowledge you and then ask for your question or comment. Stating your name and location not only helps the instructor, but also helps other students who are participating at different locations to get to know their classmates.



Course Overview

Why an *Interview Skills for Supervisors: Finding the Best Match* program?

As the selecting official, you have worked hard to verify your position descriptions, develop KSAs, crediting plans, and questionnaires, and review the job announcement in order to find the best candidates for your vacant position. Now that you have that much-anticipated certificate of eligibles in your possession, what's next? This course provides tips and techniques on choosing the "right" person through the interview process.

Target Audience

Supervisors and selecting officials.

Program Timing

Interview Skills for Supervisors: Finding the Best Match is a three hour TELNPS course.

Learning Objectives

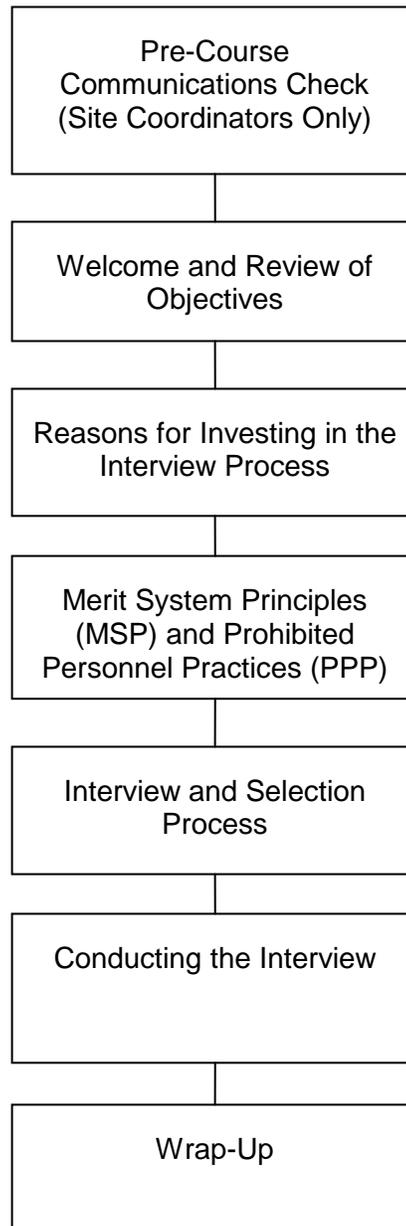
- Explain how the Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices apply to your interview process.
- List the steps involved in the interview process.

- Explain the benefits of using a matrix in the interview and selection process.
- Develop criteria for evaluating candidates.
- Recognize the "red flags" that come up in the application and during the interview.
- State which questions to ask, and more importantly, what NOT to ask.
- Identify questions for interviewing former supervisors, peers, and references.
- List the documentation you need to keep during and after the interview process.

Site Point-of-Contact Responsibilities

The TEL Station Site Point-of-Contact must reserve the training room, notify employees that the park will be participating in this TEL training event, make sure the Participant Guide is available to students, set up the TEL Station on the day of the training, make sure students sign in on the attendance roster, and finalize the Class Attendance Roster in DOI Learn.

Interview Skills for Supervisors: Finding the Best Match Course Map



Reasons for Investing in the Interview Process

Break into small groups for the following exercise. Be sure to designate a spokesperson for your site and be ready to share your list!

Think about:



What are some challenges that you have experienced, or that you have seen other supervisors experience, when it comes to interviewing or selecting applicants for a vacant position?

List your interview challenges here:

A simple line drawing of a pen, angled diagonally. The pen is shown with a dashed line indicating its shadow or the surface it is resting on.

For our course today we will be planning to fill a seasonal Visitor Use Assistant position. We will discuss the type of certificate we are using, look at six applicants for the position, prepare interview and reference questions, look for red flags, and make a selection.

Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices

Refer to the MSPs and PPPs below. Highlight those that, for your protection, you will need to be especially careful to comply with during the interviewing process.

MERIT SYSTEM PRINCIPLES adapted from 2301(b) of title 5 USC by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management:

1. Recruit, select, and advance on merit after fair and open competition.
2. Treat employees and applicants fairly and equitably.
3. Provide equal pay for equal work and reward excellent performance.
4. Maintain high standards of integrity and concern for the public interest.
5. Manage employees efficiently and effectively.
6. Retain or separate employees on the basis of their performance.
7. Educate and train employees if it will result in better organizational or individual performance.
8. Protect employees from improper political influence.
9. Protect employees against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information in “whistleblower” situations.

PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICES adapted from 2302(b) of title 5 USC by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management:

1. Illegally discriminate for or against any employee/applicant.
2. Solicit or consider improper employment recommendations.
3. Coerce an employee’s political activity.
4. Obstruct a person’s right to compete for employment.
5. Influence any person to withdraw from competition for a position.
6. Give unauthorized preference or improper advantage.
7. Employ or promote a relative.
8. Retaliate against a “whistleblower” whether an employee or applicant.
9. Retaliate against employees or applicants filing an appeal.
10. Unlawfully discriminate for off-duty conduct.
11. Knowingly violate veterans’ preference requirements.
12. Violate any law, rule, or regulation which implements or directly concerns the merit principles.

Exercise: Which Path Is He/She On?

The path to hiring a new employee or the path to having to hire an attorney?

Consider each of the 4 scenarios below. Take a few minutes to identify whether or not there is a problem with the supervisor's behavior/actions. Try to determine whether a Merit System Principle or Prohibited Personnel Practice is involved.

Case #1 A supervisor has one veteran on her certificate of eligibles. When describing the job to the veteran, the supervisor tends toward the negative aspects of the job. When describing it to others, she is more neutral to positive

OK? NOT OK?

Violation? _____

Case #2 While reviewing applicants for a Motor Vehicle Operator position, the supervisor decides to interview 3 candidates that have the most experience related specifically to snow plow operation since that is one of the major components of the position. He asks the same job related questions of these candidates..

OK? NOT OK?

Violation? _____

Case #3 The Chief of Interpretation calls the Supervisory Wildlife Biologist in his park and encourages him to be on the lookout for an application that his son is submitting for a seasonal Bio Tech position. He mentions he feels that his son needs to do something constructive this summer and needs to make some money for school

OK? NOT OK?

Violation? _____

Case #4 The Administrative Officer in a small park is struggling with meeting deadlines for end of the year closeout in Budget and Contracting because two of her employees are out for 12 weeks each on FMLA leave related to the birth of new children. During the course of interviewing applicants, she asks applicants whether or not they are expecting, or in the case of male applicants, whether their spouse is expecting.

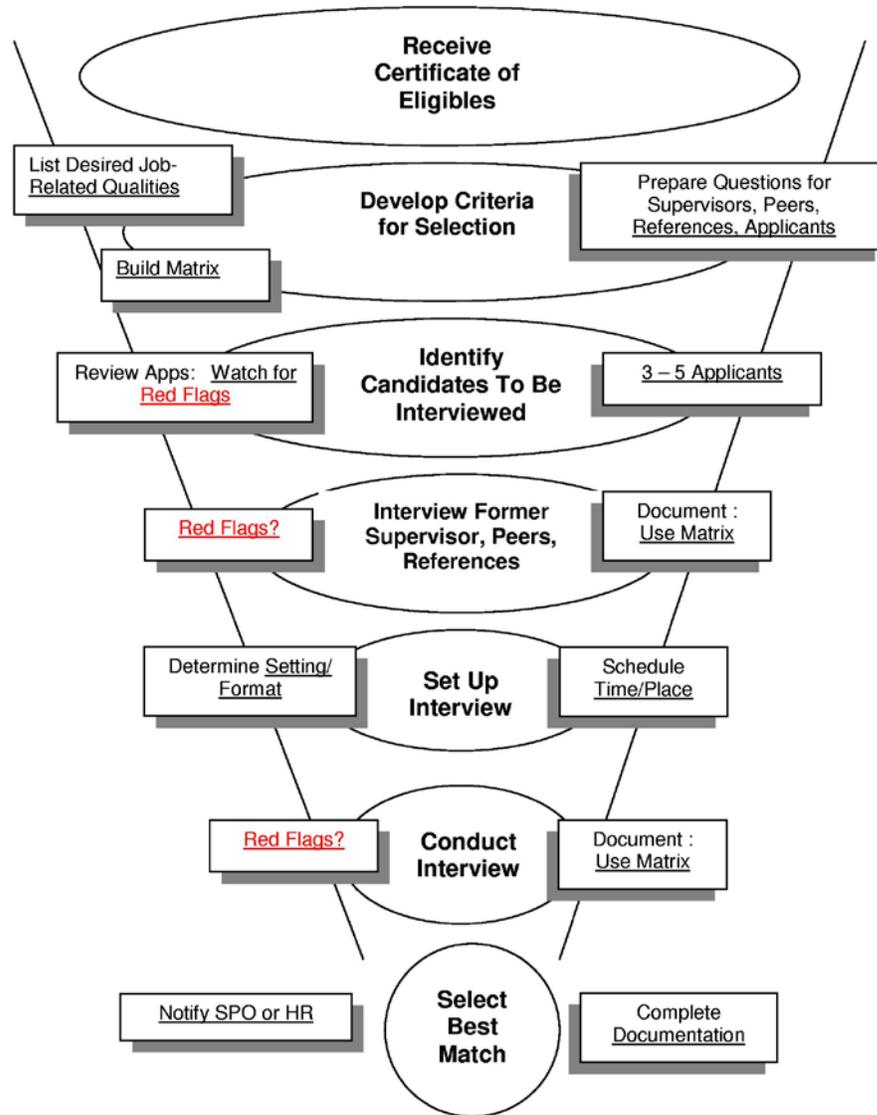
OK? NOT OK?

Violation? _____

See Appendix A for some samples violations of Prohibited Personnel Practices.

Interview and Selection Process

The Interview Process: Selecting the Best Match



Interview and Selection Process

Case Study for our course today:

We are going to use a scenario throughout our course today with you as a supervisor preparing to hire a seasonal Visitor Use Assistant (VUA) . Your position has been advertised and you just received your certificate of eligibles from the HR office. Appendix B and C of this participant guide contain a condensed VUA position description and 6 applications for your position. As we move through the course today, we will be working on hiring the best candidate for this position.

STEP 1 DEVELOP CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

A. Build a matrix to record answers to your questions and a rating scale for the answers. Sample found in Appendix D.

You'll want your matrix to include the following information: applicant name; space for their responses to each of the rating criteria; space to annotate any red flags, and notes.

B. Develop your rating criteria (list of job related qualities)

- What is your "vision" of a successful incumbent?
- Go beyond KSA's to actual experiences and demonstrated understanding
- Beginnings of performance elements for position – preliminary rating
- Strategic way to approach the interviews consistently and legally

C. Decide how you will rate the applicants responses to questions.

Developing a detailed rating scale

- Promotes objectivity
- Promotes consistency
- Assign numerical scores to the applicant's responses to your interview questions (5, 10, 15 points) or categorize them (excellent, good, not so good)

Example of a “Job-Related Criteria” for a VUA

Criteria: *Job experience in dealing with the public*

Rating Scale:

- Excellent (2 pts.) = *1+ year of experience in similar customer service position (VUA in another park, visitor information desk, job answering questions from visitors)*
- Good (1 pt.) = 6 months experience in similar customer service position
- Not So Good (0 pts.) = Experience in customer service position but not necessarily related duties (store clerk, restaurant, receptionist)

Exercise: Developing a List of “Job-Related Qualities”

Think about the criteria that you will be looking for as you review the applications and interview candidates for the VUA position (Pd in Appendix B).

After you have developed a list of 3 or 4 criteria, write them on the matrix at Appendix D.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY CANDIDATES YOU WOULD LIKE TO INTERVIEW

A. Once you have developed your questions and how you plan to score responses, evaluate all of your applications against this criteria. When completed, you can narrow your candidates down to the 3-5 (for one vacancy) that you would like to interview.

Your ability to limit the number of applicants you interview may depend on the type of position you are filing and the type of certificate you receive. There are different rules that relate to this process.

| TYPE OF POSITION | RECRUITMENT METHOD |
|---|--|
| Permanent, full time or subject-to-furlough | Merit Promotion |
| Term | All Sources |
| Temporary/Seasonal | Rule of 3 certification Category Rating certification |

If your position is a permanent position, you may be recruiting through Merit Promotion and/or through a competitive examining process open to all sources. In the case of Merit Promotion, you may receive lots of applications for your position and are able to consider and select any of the names on the list. Paring the applicants down to a reasonable number to interview in this situation makes sense.

If you have a competitive examining certificate as in the case of temporary/seasonal positions, you may be more limited on how you go about this process depending on the type of certification you have chosen. Using the Rule of 3, your candidates appear on the certificate in score order and you are able to consider only the top three candidates, thereby pre-determining who you will interview.

If your chosen competitive examining method was Category Rating, you may have 50+ candidates in your best qualified category for you to consider for one or two vacancies. In this situation, evaluating the applications using this process initially, will help you to reduce the volume to a manageable level to interview those candidates that you believe possess the best match for your position.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY CANDIDATES YOU WOULD LIKE TO INTERVIEW (continued)

B. As you review the applications, it is important to watch for possible “**red flags**”. Red flags do not necessarily mean that you don’t want to consider someone, at least during your initial application review, it just means you will want to make sure you get some clarification on them during the interview process.

Application Red Flags

- Gaps in employment history
- Questionable dates
- Level of responsibility – if the job title and the description don’t match
- Cannot contact current employer
- Dramatic departure from educational background
- Departing a permanent Federal job before the end of 1 year

Interview Red Flags

- Oral description of experience doesn’t match written description
- Level of expertise is not obvious from oral description
- Argumentative
- Provides one word answers or says “sure I did that”
- Evasive and noncommittal
- Speaks ill of former employers
- Angry body language – scowl, crossed arms
- Responses like “usually works well with others” from references

A BRIEF look at Suitability...

Reasons to passover an applicant or remove the applicant from further consideration:

- You believe the applicant over-inflated their qualifications
- During the interview process, you uncovered some information that is derogatory, or reveals serious work or character flaws

HR can address your concerns regarding suitability and make a determination regarding the applicant. There are pre-determined criteria that HR uses to evaluate concerns raised by you as the selecting official and depending on their delegated authority this evaluation may take some time. Work with your HR office to understand this procedure.

Exercise: Capture the Flag!

Look at the excerpts from the VUA candidate applications in Appendix C and identify any red flags. **Make note of any red flags on your matrix at Appendix D.**



What are some red flags that appear in these applications?

Who are your top three candidates to interview?

STEP 3: INTERVIEW FORMER SUPERVISORS, PEERS , REFERENCES

3a. What You Want To Learn When Conducting Your Interviews?

From Former Supervisors:

- *Work history*
- *Dependability*
- *Initiative*
- *Special projects*
- *Suggestions*

From Coworker/Peers:

- *Teamwork*
- *Support of the whole*
- *Personality, attitude*
- *Trust*

From Direct Reports:

- *"Would you work for this supervisor again? Why or why not?"*
- *Feedback*

From References:

- *Same information as from co-workers/peers*
- *The applicant gave you these names because they will make them look good. Try to question to draw them out a little.*

From the Applicant:

- *All of the above including their job-related knowledge, skill, and ability*

Don't read between the lines

- *Private industry, by policy, might only verify employment; that doesn't mean the applicant was a bad employee*
- *If the answer to a question is "I can't discuss that," it doesn't mean the applicant was a bad employee*

A couple of things to remember:

- **Be sure you ask each candidate the same questions**
- **Follow-up questions are fine if a response by an applicant generate another question**
- **Use this opportunity to follow-up on any red flags that appeared on their application**

Subjects to Avoid

| SUBJECT | ILLEGAL | LEGAL If Job-Related |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Age | Any question which tends to identify applicants between 40-64 years of age is illegal . <i>Example: Do you remember the 1940 election?</i> | There is no legal question that can be asked regarding this subject. The SPO may verify age to ensure legally set minimum age limits are set. |
| Citizenship | Any of the following questions cannot be asked: <i>Are you a citizen of the U.S.? Are your parents or spouse U.S. citizens? When did you acquire U.S. citizenship? Are you native-born or naturalized?</i> | There is no legal question that can be asked regarding this subject. The SPO may verify citizenship requirements for the job being filled. |
| National Origin | Do not ask any of the following questions: <i>What is your national origin? What language is spoken in your home? What is your native language?</i> | There is no legal question that can be asked regarding this subject. |
| Race/Color | Any question that directly or indirectly relates to race or color cannot be asked. | There is no legal question that can be asked regarding this subject. |
| Religion | The following questions cannot be asked: <i>What church do you attend? What religious holidays do you observe?</i> | There is no legal question that can be asked regarding this subject. |
| Sex | Gender-related questions cannot be asked. <i>Examples: What are your plans for having children in the near future? Do you mind having a male/female supervisor? What are the ages of your children? Is your husband/wife in the military?</i> | There is no legal question that can be asked regarding this subject. The SPO may verify if other family members work at the installation. |
| Education | Do not ask questions that specifically seek the nationality, racial, or religious affiliation of a school the individual attended. Do not ask the candidate's education level, if not related to the job being filled. | Questions concerning a candidate's academic, vocational, or professional education may be asked as long as they pertain to KSAs related to the position being filled. |
| Organizational Affiliation | You may not ask about a candidate's membership in organizations, societies, or clubs. | Questions related to this subject may be asked if they are related to the job being filled and show how the candidate's participation in an organization may fulfill KSAs. |
| Work Schedule/Travel | Do not ask questions related to child care, ages of children, or other non-job-related areas. | Special job requirements such as travel, unusual hours, or overtime may be stated. <i>Example: In this job, you have to travel 1 week every month. Is that a problem for you?</i> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Military Discharge | The following question may not be asked: <i>Were you honorably discharged from military service?</i> | There is no legal question that can be asked regarding this subject. The SPO may verify this information if there is a requirement to do so. |
| Economic Status | The following questions may not be asked: <i>Do you have a good credit rating? Do you have any trouble with bills/collection agencies?</i> | There is no legal question that can be asked regarding this subject. |
| Security Clearance | The following question may not be asked: <i>Do you have a secret/top secret clearance?</i> | If the job to be filled requires a certain type of security clearance, this condition may be stated. <i>Example: This job requires a top secret clearance. Does this present a problem for you?</i> |
| Personal Plans | The following question may not be asked: <i>Do you plan on living in this area long?</i> | There is no legal question that can be asked regarding this subject. |
| Participation in Certain Activities | You may not ask the following questions: <i>Do you plan to take savings bonds/contribute to the CFC/join the coffee club?</i> | There is no legal question that can be asked regarding this subject. |
| Police Record | Do not ask: <i>Have you ever been arrested?</i> | Special job requirements such as bonding may be stated. <i>Example: In order to fill this job, you must be bonded. Does that present any problem for you?</i> NOTE: You can ask a candidate if he/she has ever been convicted of a crime, if you know he/she has been arrested. |
| Medical Issues | You may not ask disability-related questions until after a conditional job offer is made. Do not ask if applicant will need reasonable accommodation unless applicant has known disability or has asked for such in the application process. (NOTE: It is <u>never</u> appropriate to ask about medical issues, whether or not related to a disability!) | You may ONLY ask about the applicant's ability to perform specific job functions. You may ask applicant to describe or demonstrate how he/she will perform job tasks. |
| Miscellaneous | Questions that are not job-related or necessary for determining a candidate's possession of required KSAs may not be asked. | The candidate may be notified that statements, misstatements, or omissions of significant facts may be cause for non-selection. |

Exercise: To Ask or Not To Ask (Part 1)

Prepare Your Questions

Write 1 appropriate, legal question that you will ask those you interview for the VUA position. (Don't let anyone see your question yet.)



Write 1 question that you might be tempted to ask, but that for some subtle reason would be illegal or inappropriate. (Don't let anyone else see your questions.)

Exercise: To Ask or Not To Ask (Part 2)

The instructor will now call on a few sites to share their questions. You may want to follow along. Space is provided below for notes.

Ask **Don't Ask** **Why not?**_____

Ask **Don't Ask** **Why not?**_____

Questions You Can Ask!

Here is a list of sample questions for assessing some of the job-related qualities of the candidates. These can be asked of the candidate and references.

Communication Skills

- Give me an example of a formal oral presentation that you have made.
- Tell me about a time when you had to explain your work to people unfamiliar with it.
- Tell me about the written document you have produced in the past year that you're the most proud of.

Emotional Maturity

- Describe a particularly stressful situation you were faced with at work. How did you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time when you conformed to a policy even though you disagreed with it.
- Tell me about how you handled irate customers in your last job.

Decision Making

- Tell me about your ability to analyze data and reach conclusions.
- On your last job, what kind of decisions were you given authority to make?
- Tell me about how you go about getting the cooperation of others to get a job completed.

Work Experience

- What specific parts of your work history or education do you believe have prepared you for this job?
- The most significant problems/issues in this job are...How would you address these?
- What accomplishment on your most recent job are you most proud of? What would you most likely do differently?

Other Questions

- Tell me why you want this particular job.
- Tell me why you want to work for the NPS.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
- What do you consider to be your greatest strength, and why?
- What area do you most want to improve, and why?
- Give me an example of a situation where you had to be especially creative in solving a problem or accomplishing a task.

Areas to avoid:

Softball Questions:

- For example, "Do you get along well with co-workers?" The answers are predictable and not likely to be helpful.

Leading questions:

- For example, "You're comfortable dealing with people, aren't you?" This approach has you providing the answers that the candidate merely needs to agree to.

Stock questions:

- "where do you plan to be in 5 years"; "what are your career goals". Everyone has heard these questions before and has probably developed a stock reply - you won't really get any useful information.

Implausible situations:

- Don't make the mistake of thinking you will discover a lot about the applicant's intelligence, character or other quals by asking some of those situational questions like, 'what would you do if left alone in the desert with no food or water, miles from nowhere'

Impenetrable jargon:

- Don't try to find out how much an applicant knows about your organization by your use of acronyms common to your operation. This just gets in the way of finding out truly useful information.

Don't talk to much!

- It's tough to learn anything about the applicant when you are doing all the talking. Don't try to fill up the quiet spaces in the conversation, give the applicant a minute to think and fill up that space themselves.

Don't listen too little!

- Be an attentive listener, you will learn more about the applicant that way.

Exercise: Obtaining Helpful Responses

Write 1 question that would elicit a helpful response from a supervisor of one of the VUA applicants.

Write 1 question that would elicit a helpful response from a peer of one of the VUA applicants.

Write 1 question that would draw out more objective, less biased information from a reference provided by an applicant.

As you check with supervisors, peers, and references, remember to document information and impressions using the matrix you've prepared.

STEP 5: Setting Up the Interview

Some things to remember:

- Responsibility rests with you as the supervisor, the selecting official; it should not be delegated.
- Consistency in contacts you make with applicants is important toward achieving the overall goal.
- The crediting plan is confidential. You should not have lower-graded employees involved, because they may gain an advantage in future competition (primarily with permanent positions).
- Consider interviewing at least the top 3 applicants.
- You should interview references and former supervisors for each of at least the top 3 applicants.

Determine setting and conditions for interview:

- Panel vs. Individual (VUA would be individual. Why?)
- Faxing questions ahead of time: Should you or shouldn't you?

Scheduling the Interview

Give plenty of advance notice and give everyone the same opportunity to succeed. Here is a list of items to include as you schedule with the applicant.

- Verify interest in job.
- Inform the applicant that you will be calling former supervisors, co-workers, and references.
- Provide information re: job duties, geographic location, housing, etc.
- Schedule time for interview (allow yourself 5-10 min. afterwards).
- Schedule place for interview (if in person). Do all the same way. If you interview some by phone, do all by phone, out of fairness.
- Leave call back number and alternative contact and/or email for follow-up questions.
- Be sure and follow your HR guidance for documenting any declinations you may receive at this point.

STEP 6: CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Setting the Stage

- Use the contact record form (“matrix” in Appendix C of this guide)
- Have a time limit in mind when you start
- Quiet place, free from interruptions (no telephones or radios).
- Are you nervous? Relax. Put the applicant at ease.
- Be friendly.

Taking Control of the Interview by Defining Objectives

- Review the purpose of the interview and your plan.
- Review the job/location/work schedule/other pertinent info.
- Tell the applicant if you’re taking notes.
- Remember! Talking = 75% applicant, 25% you.

Questioning

- Work through your prepared questions/take notes.
- Don’t allow answers to run on excessively.
- Be clear and concise.

Using the Matrix

- Be aware of the criteria you set up.
- Be attentive to positives and “red flags.”

Selling Your Opportunity

- Be enthusiastic about your job and working for the NPS.
- Do not offer comments about applicants’ “fit” yet.

Closing

- Answer applicant’s questions.
- Don’t feel obligated to answer sensitive questions. For example, *How did I do? Where do I fall? Is this job already planned for someone else?*
- Tell applicants where you are in the process and when they will know the results.
- End on a positive note and thank them for their time.

After the Interview

Document your impressions and questions/concerns on the matrix following each interview. Write It Down and Keep It In a Safe Place!

- The minute you hang up the phone, take a few minutes to write down your impressions.
- Review the matrix and other interview notes (with references as well as with applicants).
- Note particularly positive or questionable answers.
- Contact the SPO to advise of selection.
- Courtesy call to those interviewed who were not selected. (Optional, but a “touch of class.”)

STEP 7: OBTAIN APPROPRIATE APPROVALS AND SET THE EOD DATE FOR YOUR NEW EMPLOYEE!

EXERCISE: Who would you hire?

Recordkeeping

- CFR regulations – safeguard your cert and the information contained within.
- Interview notes – maintain for a reasonable period of time in your own files
- Specific documentation – maintain for a reasonable period of time; copy to HR.
 - Declinations, questions, problems, etc.

Wrap-Up

Helpful Resources

For MSPs and PPPs:

www.opm.gov/omsoe/merit/legal.htm

www.opm.gov/ovrsight/prohibit.htm

To Receive Credit for *Interview Skills for Supervisors: Finding the Best Match*

Take the **on-line evaluation** at: www.nps.gov/training/tel

- Click on the DOI Learn tab
- Go to the link under Class Evaluations for *Interview Skills for Supervisors: Finding the Best Match*
- Please complete the evaluation within 2 weeks of the course, by **February 17, 2010**

Also, sign the **Class Attendance Roster**.

APPENDIX A Examples of Cases Heard Before Office of Special Counsel

PPP #1 Illegally discriminate for or against applicant or employee

OSC charged a supervisor and a co-employee with religious discrimination and reprisal against a Jewish employee for creating a hostile work environment filled with outright and persistent religious slurs. The Supervisor initially was successful in having the Jewish employee removed for performance reasons. The courts ruled that his removal was discriminatory and the OSC prosecuted both the Supervisor and the co-employee for their roles. During the case, the Supervisor resigned and the MSPB ruled that he would be debarred from Federal service for a period of 5 years. The co-employee was ordered demoted a full grade.

PPP #5 Influence any person to withdraw from competition

In this case, the complainant alleged that management officials at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), in Michigan, attempted to influence him to withdraw from competition for a position he applied for at VAMC. OSC found that management officials at the VAMC did attempt to influence the complainant to withdraw from competition for a position, based on their belief that they were looking out for the complainant's best interests in attempting to dissuade him from giving up a career appointment for a temporary position, which is nevertheless a prohibited personnel practice.

The Veterans Administration (VA) agreed to informal corrective/disciplinary action. The VA issued a memorandum to supervisors at the VAMC; specifically including the managers who attempted to influence complainant to withdraw from competition for a position. This memorandum reviews prohibited personnel practices and merit system principles.

PPP #5 Influence any person to withdraw from competition

The complainant in this case, a contract representative with the Social Security Administration, Texas, alleged that her supervisor, willfully obstructed her from competing for a GS-5/7 social insurance specialist (claim representative) position with promotion potential to GS-11 and attempted to influence her to withdraw from competing for one of the five vacancies.

OSC investigation revealed that the supervisor told the complainant and other contract representatives, before the positions were announced, that he was only going to be considering external applicants for the claim representative vacancies so they need not apply. The complainant applied anyway, but did not make the referral list. OSC found that while the supervisor did not commit any prohibited personnel practices, he did violate Civil Service Regulation 330.1001 (Withdrawal from Competition), which prohibits a federal official from attempting to influence another person to withhold filing an application for the purpose of improving or injuring the employment prospects of any one person. After requesting and receiving OSC approval, the agency suspended the supervisor for 1 day.

PPP #5 Influence any person to withdraw from competition

A component of the Department of the Navy advertised a position for a Supervisory Marine Transportation Specialist. The position was offered to an applicant. Later, in an OPM audit of

the selection, they discovered that there was an applicant that had not been afforded veterans preference. The agency wanted to passover the veteran but OPM did not approve it and they were ordered to offer the position to the veteran. The agency's HR Officer and the Supervisor of the position wrote a letter to the veteran describing the job, working conditions, location and living conditions in very discouraging terms and asking if the veteran was still interested. The selecting official also called the veteran on the phone. The veteran ended up stating that he was no longer interested in the position. The Administrative Judge in this case concluded that the Supervisor and the HR Officer's action influenced the veteran to withdraw and ordered each of them suspended without pay for 60 days. The HR Officer ended up retiring prior to his suspension taking effect; however, the OSC fined him \$1,000 since he would not be around to receive his suspension.

PPP #6 Give unauthorized preference or advantage to any person

Complainant, a federal employee, alleged that the agency provided a preferred candidate an unauthorized employment preference in violation of 5 U.S.C. 2302(b)(6). The complainant alleged, among other things, that the preference was granted to management's preferred candidate after she failed to qualify on the certificate of eligible candidates. Thereafter, the agency re-announced the position including a new Knowledge Skills and Abilities (KSAs) requirement—knowledge of EEO law—which the position did not call for. Consequently, the preferred candidate, who had extensive experience with EEO matters, was ultimately selected for the position under the revised announcement. OSC investigated and found that there was sufficient evidence to warrant issuing a formal corrective action letter and prohibited personnel practice report to the Secretary of State. In response to the OSC letter and report, the State Department agreed to take the following full corrective action: (1) re-assign the selectee to another position; (2) re-advertise the position using the original vacancy announcement and KSAs; (3) contact all applicants, including veterans, who applied under the first announcement; (4) ensure that all applicants are evaluated by individuals who were not involved with the first two vacancy announcements and; (5) require identified staff members within the agency to attend prohibited personnel practice training.

PPP #6 Give unauthorized preference or advantage to any person/Nepotism

A federal agency suspended a selecting official for five days and her supervisor for three days, and gave the Division Chief an oral admonishment that will remain in his supervisory file for two years for violating the anti-nepotism laws and granting an unauthorized preference or advantage to certain applicants (including several relatives of agency officials and advocacy for official's own relative) for vacant positions in an installation. The federal agency also agreed to provide outreach training about prohibited personnel practices to relevant management officials.

PPP #8 Retaliate against a whistleblower

The complainant was a GS-5 seasonal helitack firefighter at a National Park. He disclosed to management that his supervisor assaulted a co-worker. Subsequently, his supervisor gave him a "not achieved" performance rating for the fire season and told him he would not be rehired for the following season. He alleged that both decisions were based on his protected whistleblowing.

The investigation showed that management had knowledge of the complainant's disclosure at the time it gave him his rating and informed him he would not be rehired. The investigation also showed that the evidence to support the rating was not supported and was made up in order to give the unsatisfactory rating. The agency agreed to take corrective action. It removed all derogatory information from its personnel files, gave the complainant a new "achieved" rating, provided the complainant with back pay for missed salary and overtime because he was not rehired, and issued a letter offering him a position for the 2005 fire season. The complainant accepted the job offer.

Appendix B: VUA Position Description Excerpt

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE BENCHMARK POSITION DESCRIPTION VISITOR USE ASSISTANT GS-303-04

INTRODUCTION

This position is supervisory in nature.

Responsibilities of this position include contacting visitors, collecting and accounting for fees, and disseminating information. While other duties may include visitor management-related services such as traffic control, radio dispatching, or backcountry patrols, visitor contacts, fee collection, and information dissemination are primary and constitute **at least 80% of the duties of this position.**

STATEMENT OF WORK (DUTIES)

1. Visitor Information

As a uniformed employee of the National Park Service (NPS), incumbent serves as a front-line representative of the agency. In many instances, the incumbent is the first and only contact the visiting public has with an NPS employee. Incumbent works at an entrance station, visitor center, campground, or other visitor contact station.

As an NPS Visitor Use Assistant, incumbent is responsible for providing answers to recurring visitor questions concerning the specific park area. Explains the area's recreational opportunities, including NPS interpretive services, concession-operated facilities and services, and campground availability; distributes maps, brochures, and other printed material; provides directions and routes of travel through the park; and informs visitors of potential safety hazards.

Appendix B: VUA Position Description Excerpt, cont'd.

2. Fee Collection

As an NPS Visitor Use Assistant, incumbent is responsible for collecting appropriate fees at park entrance station, visitor center, campground, or other visitor contact station following established accountability guidelines for handling Government funds. Incumbent operates an electronic cash register, performs opening and closing shift functions, issues entrance receipts, park passes, and Federal recreation passports in accordance with established guidelines, and verifies entrance receipts and various passes for validity dates.

Incumbent completes shift reports to verify money collected, accountable stock sold and all machine transactions from the shift using journal and receipt tapes and a register of voided transactions. Safeguards funds collected and personal accountable stock.

May perform campground duties such as collecting fees, monitoring campground self-registration collection activities, checking site availability, and/or conducting compliance checks of campground users to ensure proper payment of fees.

3. Other Duties

In accomplishing his/her work, employee may perform any or all of the following duties depending on the specific needs of the park area. These duties are secondary to the visitor contact, fee collection, and information dissemination functions and constitute **20% or less of the duties of this position**. These duties may include:

- Performs traffic control at park entrance and/or related locations
- Gathers information from reporting parties concerning accidents/incidents occurring within the park area and notifies appropriate personnel
- Serves as radio dispatcher during emergency incidents
- Serves as member of area's search and rescue team and/or fire suppression crew
- Provides emergency medical treatment to current level of training and responsibility
- Performs minor maintenance duties to ensure a clean, safe work area
- Restocks supplies as needed

Appendix B: VUA Position Description Excerpt, cont'd.

FACTOR STATEMENTS

FACTOR 1. KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION

To perform the duties of this position, the employee must have the following knowledge, skills, and abilities:

- Knowledge and skill in the accountable handling of cash, checks, and credit cards, and ability to accurately complete standard mathematical calculations and make change under stressful conditions
- Ability to operate electronic cash register, credit card machine, calculator, typewriter, and computer
- Knowledge of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1993, Departmental, NPS, and park fee collection guidelines and procedures
- Ability to communicate effectively and deal with a high volume of personal contacts
- Knowledge of NPS mission and goals
- Knowledge of park organization and operations

Appendix C: Application Excerpts

ADAMS, ELIZABETH

Work Experience

8th Grade Math Teacher, Columbus Unified School District

09/1982 to present, \$39,000 per year, 40 hours per week

Park Guide, NPS Visitor Center, GS-5, Seasonal

6/2007 to 8/2007, 40 hours per week

Volunteer, NPS Visitor Center

06/10/02-08/31/02, Unpaid, 15 hours per week – Provided visitor information

Education

University of Georgia, 125 semester hours, B.S. Education 1982

Other Qualifications

Volunteer of the Month, NPS, July 2002

HUDSON, JAMES

Work Experience

Fund Raising Position, Rang bell and greeted people in front of stores.

11/2006-12/2006, 40 hours per week

Bookkeeping for a variety of small businesses, filing, copying, faxing, phones, 06/2005-07/2007

Retail Sales Associate, Big Bear Gifts, seasonal, 5/2004-9/2004

Education

Monterey Community College, 78 semester hours, A.A. Anthropology 1992

University of California Berkeley, 80 semester hours, B.A. Women's Studies
2000

Other Qualifications

Able to use various construction tools, has done work for Habitat for Humanity

Appendix C: Application Excerpts, cont'd.

RODRIQUEZ, MARK

Work Experience

Park Guide, Padre Island National Seashore, seasonal GS-5
10/2005-3/2006 and 10/2006-3/2007

Visitor Use Assistant, Colorado National Monument, GS-5
Seasonal 5/2006-9/2006 and 5/2007-9/2007

Finance Clerk, United States Marine Corps
10/01/1999-12/31/2002, \$28,000 per year, Full-time active duty

Advertising Sales Representative, Willow Bay Tribune
08/1998-09/1999, \$5.50 per hour plus commission, 20 hours
per week

Education

Willow Bay High School, H.S. Diploma 1998

Other Qualifications

Volunteer at Willow Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Summer 1998

SAUNDERS, MARIE

Work Experience

Document Research Analyst, Middlebrook Regional Art Museum
06/2002-Present, \$8.50 per hour, 40 hours per week

Sales Associate, Target
9/2001-6/2002, 40 hours per week

Research Intern, Middlebrook Regional Art Museum
06/2001-08/2001, \$6.50 per hour, 20 hours per week

Education

Ohio State University, 125 semester hours, B.A. Music Appreciation 2002

Other Qualifications

None listed

Appendix C: Application Excerpts, cont'd.

VALE, DANIEL

Work Experience

Outdoor Equipment Department Manager, A to Z Sporting Goods Outlet

06/2006-Present, \$31,000 per year, 40 hours per week

Outdoor Equipment Salesclerk, A to Z Sporting Goods Outlet

06/2005-05/20062, \$8.75 per hour, 30 hours per week

Education

Calamaya Community College, 65 semester hours, A.A. Accounting 2004

Other Qualifications

Volunteer, Calamaya County Nature Center. Conducted interpretive tours for groups. Summer 2001

WILLIAMS, CHARLES

Work Experience

Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Utah Field Office

02/2004-11/2006, \$32,000 per year, 40 hours per week

Biologist, U.S. Geological Survey, Flagstaff, Arizona

01/2001-09/2001, \$29,000 per year, Permanent Career

Conditional, GS-401-11; 40 hours per week

Retail Clerk, Lee's Tee's, Dillon Colorado

6/1991-4/1992 – Cash register, verify receipts, stock shelves

Education

Texas Tech University, 125 semester hours, B.S. Biology 1991

University of Texas, D.V.M. Veterinary Medicine 1996

Other Qualifications

None listed

Appendix D: Contact Form (Matrix)

| NAME | CRITERION #1: | CRITERION #2: | CRITERION #3: | CRITERION #4: | RED FLAGS | NOTES/ SPECIFIC QUESTIONS |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Mark Rodriquez | | | | | | |
| Elizabeth Adams | | | | | | |
| James Hudson | | | | | | |
| Marie Saunders | | | | | | |
| Daniel Vale | | | | | | |
| Charles Williams | | | | | | |

APPENDIX E: Sample Questions

- Describe the candidate's technical competence in....
- Describe the candidate's ability to work with others.
- Describe the candidate's ability to work individually and be self-motivated.
- Tell me how productively this person used time.
- How would you characterize the candidate's dependability, including attendance?
- Describe this candidate's initiative in bringing a project to completion.
- Characterize the candidate's communication skills – oral and written.
- How has this person earned the respect of co-workers, partners, management?
- Describe the candidate's work performance under stress.
- What do you believe is the candidate's greatest strength? Weakness?
- Would you rehire this person or seek to work with him/her again? Why or why not?

Here is a list of sample questions for assessing some of the job-related qualities of the candidates.

Communication Skills

- Give me an example of a formal oral presentation that you have made.
- Tell me about a time when you had to explain your work to people unfamiliar with it.
- Tell me about the written document you have produced in the past year that you're the most proud of.

Emotional Maturity

- Describe a particularly stressful situation you were faced with at work. How did you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time when you conformed to a policy even though you disagreed with it.

- Tell me about how you handled irate customers in your last job.

Decision Making

- Tell me about your ability to analyze data and reach conclusions.
- On your last job, what kind of decisions were you given authority to make?
- Tell me about how you go about getting the cooperation of others to get a job completed.

Work Experience

- What specific parts of your work history or education do you believe have prepared you for this job?
- The most significant problems/issues in this job are...How would you address these?
- What accomplishment on your most recent job are you most proud of? What would you most likely do differently?

Other Questions

- Tell me why you want this particular job.
- Tell me why you want to work for the NPS.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
- What do you consider to be your greatest strength, and why?
- What area do you most want to improve, and why?
- Give me an example of a situation where you had to be especially creative in solving a problem or accomplishing a task.