



TOWN OF ROCKY HILL DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES GUIDELINES FOR SEARCH COMMITTEES

(Rev. 6/10/15)

Search committees play a vital role in recruiting, evaluating, and recommending the most qualified candidates for employment by the Town of Rocky Hill. Search committee members are often the first Town employees that a candidate will meet. Each member has an opportunity to represent the Town as a diverse and welcoming community while carrying out the search in accordance with Town policies and procedures.

At any point in the process, Human Resources is available for consultation, to answer questions and discuss specific situations, and offer recommendations and search committee training. Please contact Human Resources at (860) 258-2700 for any assistance you may need.

Composition of the Search Committee

The Town Manager and/or Directors (Department Heads) designate search committee chairs, and may act as search committee chairs themselves. The structure of a search committee will vary among departments, and offices, depending upon the position to be filled. The Director also appoints search committee members (if so required, with the approval of the Town Manager and/or Director of Human Resources). At all times, final decision-making authority relative to search activities and hiring decisions rests with the Town Manager or the Town Manager's designee (Director/Department Head). The search committee shall:

- Include individuals with knowledge of the substantive area and the technical expertise to effectively evaluate candidates' qualifications.
- Include appropriate stakeholders such as peers of the new hire, supervisors, and those with similar positions, as well as external stakeholders if acceptable to the Town Manager.

Committee Membership

A search committee member cannot serve on a search committee when he/she is also an applicant for the position. In the event that a search committee member is well acquainted with, or has a conflict of interest regarding, an applicant, the member must:

- Notify the search chair and the committee of the nature of the relationship; and
- Recuse him/herself from the evaluation and interview of only the known applicant, with the agreement of the chair and committee; or
- Recuse him/herself from the entire committee if unable to perform an objective and equitable review of all candidates—or if so required by majority vote of the search committee.
- Any questions regarding specific conflict situations should be directed to Human Resources for further guidance.

Search Committee Responsibilities

The Director and search committee chair, in coordination with Human Resources, are responsible for assisting with updating job descriptions and drafting job postings, and identifying ideal qualifications. With regard to job description revisions or updates, Human Resources will solicit Union input and review as needed and/or required. The search committee is responsible for recruiting for the position, evaluating applicants, participating in the interview process, and making recommendations surrounding prospective hires to the Director. Members should be available to participate fully and consistently in the entire process and to perform duties as assigned by the Director or search committee chair.

Confidentiality

Members of a search committee must maintain a strict level of confidentiality to protect the privacy of the candidates and to preserve the integrity of the search process. It is each committee member's individual responsibility to guard against inappropriate disclosure of information concerning the search. All public comments should be made exclusively by the Director, in consultation with the Town Manager and/or Director of Human Resources.

Under certain circumstances, written and electronic documentation pertaining to any given search may be subject to public record requests (Freedom of Information Act – FOIA) by the media, candidates or other individuals. Requests may encompass committee member notes and e-mails. It is important to be mindful of the possibility of FOIA requests during and after the search process, and to refer any related inquiries to the Department of Human Resources immediately.

Recruitment

Search committees are responsible for fulfilling the Town's requirement to demonstrate good faith efforts to diversify the applicant pool by proactively and aggressively recruiting for all open positions. A recruitment plan should include strategies for attracting a *diverse and qualified pool of applicants*. All search committee members should be actively engaged in executing the recruitment plan, including utilizing professional contacts, engaging in formal and informal networking, utilizing non-traditional advertising such as on-line publications, discussing the position among members of relevant membership in professional organizations, and attending conferences.

All recruitment efforts should be documented and provided to the search committee chair for the search file.

Applicant Evaluation

All searches and evaluation processes must be designed in a manner that ensures applicants are objectively evaluated.

Search committee members must use the published minimum and preferred qualifications for the position in evaluating application materials. The Director and/or search committee chair, in coordination with the Director of Human Resources and Human Resources staff, should clearly

communicate and document the criteria to be used in evaluating applicants **prior** to reviewing application materials. All applicants must be objectively screened against the same criteria.

While there is no standard screening method, an application evaluation matrix can be a useful tool in objectively assessing applicants' qualifications. Matrices can be as simple or complex as the hiring manager deems necessary to effectively evaluate the applicants.

There is no rule regarding the number of candidates a search committee must interview. Only candidates meeting or exceeding minimum qualifications should be interviewed.

Unconscious Bias and Assumptions in Candidate Evaluation¹

The evaluation of applicants should be objective and equitable. Research in this area has demonstrated that every person brings a lifetime of experience and cultural history that shapes their perspectives as related to candidate selection.

Good practices to counterbalance the effects of inherent bias include:

- Learning about research on biases and assumptions and striving to minimize their influence on the evaluation of candidates.
- Determining whether recruitment methods used in particular searches increase or decrease the likelihood of diversifying applicant pools.
- Developing criteria for evaluating candidates and applying them consistently to all applicants.
- Spending sufficient time evaluating each applicant.
- Evaluating each candidate's entire application and not depending too heavily on only one element, such as the prestige of the degree-granting institution or post-doctoral program or the letters of recommendation.
- Explaining the decision for rejecting or retaining a candidate based on evidence in the candidate's file as related to the qualifications.
- Periodically evaluating the committee's decisions to consider whether qualified women and underrepresented groups are included and whether evaluation biases and assumptions are influencing decisions.

Please refer to the links below for more information.

http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure_2ndEd.pdf

http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/Present_HERC_2011.pdf

<http://www.nber.org/digest/sep03/w9873.html>

<http://www.nber.org/papers/w9873>

Interviews

It is important to be consistent during the interview process. All members of the committee should participate in all interviews to ensure fair and consistent evaluation of each applicant. Prior to

¹ Based on Searching for Excellence & Diversity: A Guide for Search Committee Chairs, a guide developed by the Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI) at the University of Wisconsin Madison.

conducting any interview, all search committee members should discuss the objective(s) of the interview, the main topics or areas to be covered during the interview, and the itinerary and arrangements for each candidate. Interview questions must be related to the job and essential to determining the candidate's qualifications for the position.

The search committee chair should develop a core set of questions for all applicants that will elicit sufficient information to make an evaluation of the candidates' qualifications and allow an equitable comparison of the candidates. To ensure equity, the interview experience should be consistent, providing the same opportunities to each candidate.

In addition, search committee members should review Human Resource's guidelines regarding interviews to be aware of questions that are unlawful and should not be asked during the interview. Everyone participating in the interview process should be made aware of inappropriate topics and questions. Also, please bear in mind that the same questions that are inappropriate or unlawful during a formal interview are also inappropriate and unlawful in a social or less formal interview session with an applicant.

Recommendation of Final Candidates

Depending on the charge given to the search committee by the Director or Town Manager, the recommendation may be a ranked or unranked list with an explanation of the candidates' strengths and weaknesses as related to the qualifications of the position. At all times, final decision-making authority relative to search activities and hiring decisions rests with the Town Manager or the Town Manager's designee (Director/Department Head).

Unsuccessful candidates should be notified of their non-selection as soon as a firm offer has been accepted by the selected candidate.