



Creating Diverse and Inclusive Interview Panels

As we increase efforts to source and interview diverse candidates for positions throughout the Department, it is equally important to understand the impact of having panels that reflect the diversity we seek to recruit.

Diverse candidates need to see more than our commitment to diversity on our website. The initial interview will likely be one of the first personal interactions with candidates. This provides us with the opportunity to display our commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce. As the saying goes, you only get one chance to make a first impression.

Diversity, as we refer to it here, is the practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities. This includes gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, veterans' status, disability status, historically underrepresented groups, etc. We want to leverage different perspectives and views to give us the most significant advantage in advancing the Commerce mission with top performers from across the nation.

By adding a new perspective, diverse interview panels encourage us to think more broadly and inclusively about who we are bringing into the organization, seeing past our unconscious biases, and keeping the focus on being consciously inclusive.

Acknowledge Unconscious Bias in the Room

We are all naturally wired to make decisions and assumptions based on our unique perception of the world. Our opinions can be influenced by stereotypes—formed from our upbringing, social groups, and societal exposures—that sway our decisions without our conscious realization.

To create diverse interview panels, start by urging everyone on your team to acknowledge the part we all play in relying on [unconscious bias](#). To ensure transparent, consistent, and objective interviews, ensure interviewers have participated in diversity and inclusion training so that fair hiring practices are always top of mind.

Train Employees to be Good Interviewers

Train your hiring officials on how to conduct interviews. Consider adding HR or EEO employees to the interview panels. By leveraging a team-based approach, you'll gain the employees' perspectives from all over the organization. Additionally, when you include others in the hiring process, you demonstrate that you value the entire team's input, leading to higher levels of engagement and quick buy-in with new colleagues.

Encourage a Post-interview Debrief

When conducted effectively, a [post-interview debrief](#) can add tremendous value to the hiring decision.

After completing an interview, ask each panel member to provide feedback based on the candidate's hard and soft skills. To prevent the interviewers from dominating the conversation, encourage feedback using email or other feedback systems.

Remember to discuss what the candidate might bring to your bureau's culture. Explore candidates who can bring diverse values, beliefs, and experiences that will positively impact the organization. Consider inviting an HR or EEO representative to mediate the discussion and challenge bias.

Get Recent New Hire Feedback and Adapt

As a hiring official, you should always be adapting, revitalizing, and willing to update your practices to ensure a fair and inclusive interview process. To make that lift a little lighter, ask recent hires for feedback on the interview process and their candidate experience. The simple act of asking demonstrates diversity and inclusion matter, and that they're seen, heard, and valued.

Ultimately, feedback allows you to improve your [overall inclusive hiring experience](#). While some feedback may be hard to hear, challenging yourself to provide an equitable experience for all candidates is worth it. And when you give your new hires a welcoming space to voice their opinions—good or bad—they are much less likely to speak negatively about your organization to outsiders, potentially harming your organization's brand.

Provide a Standardized Interview Process

Before walking into an interview, make sure that your process is structured. Instead of encouraging free-flowing conversations, ask each candidate the same set of questions, in the same way, and in the same order every time.

When you focus on a structured, data-driven interview, you will evaluate candidates based on a strict set of criteria, significantly improving the quality of hiring decisions. And by evaluating all candidates on a level playing field, decisions will also be much more equitable.