

Human Resource Policies and Guidelines

Section: 2 Staffing

Subsection: 2.3.2 **ASSESSING CANDIDATES**

Type: Policy

Effective Date: January 1, 2010

POLICY STATEMENT

A variety of assessment methods are used to assess candidates against all [selection criteria](#).

INTENT

A variety of assessment methods, applied at different stages of the staffing process, increases the reliability of the information used to select the suitable candidate.

POLICY APPLICATION

The following assessment methods can be used to evaluate candidates:

- [screening](#)
- [interviews](#)
- [tests](#)
- [work samples](#)
- [work simulation](#)
- [self assessment](#)
- [evaluative orientation](#)
- reference checks (see [Reference Check Policy 2.3.4](#))
- security checks (see [Security Check Policy 2.3.5](#))

Human Resources may design other assessment methods according to managers' needs and consistent with the staffing principles. A good assessment method is characterized by:

- standardization - consistent content and administration
- objectivity - interpreting and scoring answers consistently
- reliability - providing consistent measurement
- [validity](#) - measuring what it is supposed to measure.

All assessment methods should take into account reasonable accommodation for an individual's special needs where those needs are associated with any characteristic protected by [The Manitoba Human Rights Code](#). See [Reasonable Accommodation Policy 3.1.3](#).

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PRACTICES

Interviewing

The interview is fair because it asks the same questions of all candidates in the same order. Behavioural interviews use questions that guide candidates to provide specific, behaviour-based examples of past performance. A variation of the structured, behavioural interview is the [informed interview](#).

The challenge in developing an effective interview is to construct interview questions that elicit information at the level required by the position and allow candidates to demonstrate the required skills and abilities. The following tips may be useful for constructing interview questions:

Knowledge Criteria: Ask questions that require candidates to show what theory, process or procedure is required to solve a problem. Avoid questions which ask candidates to recall and describe their knowledge or to list the steps in a procedure.

Skills Criteria: Ask questions that require candidates to demonstrate how a problem was solved, to analyze why an action was taken or to evaluate the outcome of an action.

Abilities Criteria: Use situational and behaviourally based questions directly related to the work to assess candidates' potential to perform a duty.

Testing

All tests must be valid, related to selection criteria, free of racial or gender bias and written at the reading and writing levels required by the position. Certain tests are commonly used in government:

- Skills and knowledge tests (pencil & paper test and computerized tests)
- Short answer quizzes for testing technical knowledge where there are universally accepted answers
- Essay examinations to assess broad concepts and writing skills

Prior to using the following types of tests, departments must consult the Civil Service Commission, be able to demonstrate the test's validity and ensure that it is administered by persons with the required training and certification:

- intelligence
- aptitude
- personality tests.

Selection decisions should not be made on tests results alone.

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Work Samples

Work samples are work simulations. Because this method measures candidates' actual performance of a simulated work duty, it has a high validity for predicting future work performance. See [Example 1 - Conservation](#).

Work samples can be used to assess a wide variety of skills, including:

- mechanical and technical skills
- computer application skills such as word-processing and computer graphics
- skills in communicating and presenting information
- analytical and decision-making skills

Work Simulation

A work simulation is an interactive type of work simulation allowing candidates to demonstrate their skills in a realistic situation. A work simulation starts by identifying a realistic or typical work situation. Creating a script for the candidates increases the accuracy and consistency in the approach by maintaining focus on the skills being assessed. It also helps the candidate feel more at ease.

A work simulation is particularly useful for assessing client communication skills, interpersonal skills, supervisory skills, analytical skills and conflict resolution skills including negotiating, mediating and persuading. Work simulations are not recommended for assessing organizational skills, job knowledge and technical skills.

Candidate Self-Assessment

Candidate self-assessment is an appropriate assessment option in situations where high risk working conditions contribute to high turnover or when the work is unusually complex.

Candidates are invited to an information session where the manager makes a presentation about the type of work and the working conditions. Candidates have an opportunity to ask questions. Based on the detailed and realistic information provided, candidates can decide to move to the next stage of assessment.

Another option is to invite candidates to visit the work location and provide exposure to the work environment to help them decide if they wish to remain in the competition.

Evaluative Orientation

Evaluative orientation refers to an extended work sample. Candidates perform the basic functions of the job within typical working conditions for several days. Their performance during the orientation is assessed in relation to established selection criteria. See [Example 2 - Justice](#).

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This method is useful for positions involving team interaction or interpersonal communication with challenging clients. Although it provides the manager with an extended opportunity to assess candidate's behaviours, it requires considerable preparation to design structured activities and to establish behavioural standards.

Since this method may create issues related to candidate availability and Workers' Compensation coverage, it is best applied to closed and internal competitions. For pay and insurance reasons, a department may need to appoint candidates on a casual basis for the duration of the evaluative orientation.

Assessment of Past Performance

Candidates' past performance is assessed through a variety of methods at different stages in the staffing process:

- In screening, assign value for specific work-related experience or training. Note that the duration of experience is not generally a reliable measure of the quality of candidates' experience.
- In the interview, ask candidates to:
 - describe their major achievements in several areas that show the differences between average and strong performers
 - present work-related incidents or scenarios and ask candidates what they would do in that situation
 - provide examples of situations in their past experience where they demonstrated a specific skill in resolving work-related problems.
- In reference checks, verify candidate's past performance.

Assessment methods are based on the theory that the best predictor of future performance is past performance in a related situation.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Civil Service Commission

Monitor application of the policy through the staffing audit process.

Selection Board

Conduct an objective assessment.

Selection Board Chair

Ensure application of the policy in the staffing process.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES / DEFINITIONS

Informed interview – In an informed interview, candidates receive information in advance of the interview. The information prepares candidates for a focussed

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interview by enabling the candidate to provide a better example that will meet the selection criteria. Examples of information shared include: selection criteria, interview questions, position description, performance standards, the organization mission and values statement, annual reports. This method, most often used for professional or management positions, has several benefits:

- a high degree of acceptance by candidates
- unsuitable candidates withdraw from the competition
- more specific responses to interview questions
- the surprise element of interviewing is removed.

Validity – Validity is the most important consideration in evaluating a test. A valid test is appropriate, meaningful and produces scores that are useful for assessing candidates. Test validation is the process of accumulating evidence to support inferences from test scores.

Examples

1. **Conservation** - In a competition for a fire ranger, Manitoba Conservation used a physical abilities test to assess candidates' ability to perform the physical demands of the Initial Attack Firefighter position.
2. **Justice** - In a competition for a nurse at Agassiz Youth Centre, Manitoba Justice asked each candidate to perform the position duties for a day. The selection board observed candidates' interpersonal skills while they worked with clients of the Youth Centre. This assessment method served to differentiate among candidates who had rated very closely in the interviews.

AUTHORITY

The Civil Service Act, Section [13\(3\)](#)

The Manitoba Human Rights Code [14\(1\)\(2\)\(4\)\(5\)](#)

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Owner:	Civil Service Commission
Additional information:	Civil Service Commission Phone: 204-945-2332 Email: csc@gov.mb.ca
