**Managing Interviews in the Nonprofit Sector**

Whether you’re taking on volunteers, staff members or Board members, it is inevitable that at some point, you will need to hold interviews in your nonprofit. With so many other priorities, it can be easy to let things slip through the cracks and lose great candidates due to an inefficient recruitment process. Below we give some examples of how you might conduct interviews in your nonprofit.

**Forming the recruitment panel**

The recruitment panel will usually consist of up to 2-3 people, and will generally include the person who will be managing the role you are recruiting for. You may also wish to include another senior staff member, a member of the Board or an external interviewer. If the role is for a statutory funded position, the funder may have specific requirements in relation to the recruitment and interview process e.g. CE (DSP) and CSP (Pobal).

**Marking Applications**

Your job description should highlight key skills, experience or qualifications the ideal candidate should have. Use this to identify 2-5 priorities which you will use to score applications. Some priorities may be more important than others and you can weight the scoring more heavily for these areas. In the example below, volunteering experience can get up to 4 points, while fundraising is only worth up to 3 points. Agree this matrix with the interview panel in advance and agree who will be scoring the applications.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Leadership experience (0-3)** | **Volunteering/ nonprofit experience (0-4)** | **Fundraising experience (0-3)** | **Qualification (0-4)** |
| 0 | No experience | No experience | No experience | No relevant qualification |
| 1 | Limited experience | Limited experience | Limited experience | QQI Level 6 |
| 2 | Good experience | Fair experience | Good experience | QQI Level 7 |
| 3 | Excellent experience | Good experience | Excellent experience | QQI Level 8 |
| 4 |  | Excellent experience |  | QQI Level 9/10 |

Once you have your matrix agreed, you can advertise the role, asking candidates to please address their leadership, nonprofit and fundraising experience (or whichever priorities you have agreed) as well as any relevant qualifications in their applications. This makes sure applicants can tailor their application to your priorities. You can then grade the applicants using a table like in the example below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Leadership (0-3)** | **Volunteering (0-4)** | **Fundraising (0-3)** | **Qualification (0-4)** | **Total**  **(0-14)** |
| Candidate 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Candidate 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 11 |
| Candidate 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| Candidate 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 12 |
| Candidate 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |

In this example, candidates 2, 3 and 4 will be called to interview. Candidates 1 and 5 will be kindly informed that their application has not been successful.

**Designing Interview Questions**

In the interview, you will want to hear a little bit more about the key priorities you identified for the application process. You will know from their CV how long they did particular roles for but you may want to hear more about whether they had particular responsibilities that you know this role will need to do, or what they found most challenging in their relevant previous roles. You will also want to hear about their motivation for applying for the role. There are lots of examples online of interview questions. In general, you will divide your questions into several sections, and decide a rating for each section.

For example, the sections might be:

1. Motivation for the role (Rate 1-5)
2. Management skills (Rate 1-5)
3. Fundraising experience (Rate 1-3)

You may want one interviewer to ask all of the questions, or for each member of the panel to ask about a different section.

Make sure you are familiar with the [9 grounds for discrimination](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/equality_in_work/equality_in_the_workplace.html) and avoid questions which relate to these.

It can be helpful to make some small talk at the beginning to put candidates at ease and it is important at the end to give the candidate a chance to ask any questions they may have.

After the interviewee has left, each member of the panel will give their rating of the candidate under each section and you’ll take an average to give the total score of that candidate.

**Preparing for the interview**

Make sure to work out in advance how long the interview will be and who will be asking which questions. You’ll need to schedule some time between interviews for the panel to decide on their rating. Review the relevant CVs before the interview and note down anything in particular you’d like to ask about.

Make sure you communicate to the candidates what the next steps will be including when they should expect to hear back from you.