VA BEDFORD HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Veteran Integrated Service Network 1

Hiring Toolkit

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Bedford Healthcare System

This toolkit is designed to be used by all VA Bedford Healthcare System staff who are involved in the hiring process as well as prospective applicants who want to get familiar with our hiring process.

This should be considered as an adjunct to all hiring managers. As our facility endeavors to address potential bias in the hiring process, increase the diversity of our workforce, and improve the quality of our hiring process. The following toolkit is an important piece of a larger strategy. While it is not currently mandated, you are highly encouraged to adhere to the guidance offered, as this is just one more positive step towards our future as a High Reliability Organization. Current resources and any edits for revision are welcomed to improve the quality of the document.

*The goal of developing this toolkit is to ensure consistent and transparent hiring practices within our health system.

The hiring toolkit has been adapted from Roseburg VA' s Hiring Toolkit.

**For any additional edits/suggestions please contact Nasreen Shaikh, MSN, RN-BC, or Stephen Gresham, Ph.D.

Table of Contents

YOUR ROLE AS THE HIRING PANEL MEMBER

Eliminating disparities and ensuring that all trainees, staff, and faculty have equal employment opportunity is vital to the VA Bedford Health Care System's (VABEDHCS) mission. It is expected that supervisors and managers maintain a standard of practice that reflects VABEDHCS values and priorities. The VA community depends on hiring managers to establish and maintain a healthy campus environment and culture. Managers and supervisors can institute cultural change through hiring practices to include adhering and/or complying to HR hiring practices. Their leadership can improve access and quality of care for all Veterans.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

❖ CREATING A HIRING PANEL

- The ideal size for most hiring panels will range from 3-5, depending on the position being hired.
- Selection panel size will be dependent on what is necessary to ensure it is representative of organizational and job position interests while minimizing pull on resources and time required to fill a position.
- Regardless of final panel size, **at least one of the panel members should represent content/competency area experts** for the position being hired.
- Panel members are encouraged to include employees, as much as feasible, that represent the diversity of the current workforce (i.e., women, black indigenous people of color (BIPOCs), disabled workers, older workers, LGBTQ+, etc.)
- It is important to remember that diversity includes a range of cultural and identity factors such as language, abilities/disabilities, socioeconomic status, religion, spiritual practices, geographic region, and other characteristics.

❖ EDUCATING THE HIRING PANEL

- Hiring panel members should be clear about the specific hiring goals for the position.
- Hiring panel members should review candidates resumes, vacancy announcement and PD prior to interview
- Panel members should be aware of unconscious and implicit bias and how that can have an impact on their judgments on a person's character and characteristics (such as appearance, voice, etc.), experiences, name, or background based on details unrelated to job performance and work ethic.
- **All hiring panel members are required to attest to have taken the following TMS training: VA 4626793**

- Additional recommended tool to raise awareness of implicit bias (not mandatory): https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html.

❖ DOMAINS AND ASSOCIATED INTERVEW QUESTIONS

- Based on the job responsibilities (e.g., knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) identified in the job description), the hiring manager will **determine domains that will be assessed** during the interview process (e.g., Clinical Skills & Expertise; Communication & Consultation Skills; Program Evaluation Skills; Supervisor or Managerial Experience).

- Areas can have multiple questions to solicit responses to adequately rate each area of expertise.

- Interview questions will include at least five **performance-based questions* that directly relate to the skills necessary for the job** AND **at least two questions that directly relate to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI; See Appendix A: Diversity-Related Interview Questions**).

- Answers for each domain area and their related question(s) will be graded on a weighted scale system (See example below).

5	4	3	2	1
Excellent Response	Above Average Response	Adequate Response	Fair Response	Poor Response

- Questions will be equally dispersed among panel members and will be asked in same order across all applicants.

- **Note:** Actual selection of Performance Based Interview (PBI) interview questions and rating criteria will be determined by the hiring manager or recruiter.

* Performance-based questions are job-related questions. These questions assist hiring managers evaluate if there is a match between a job and an individual. They also help to ensure fair evaluation of the individual applying for the job. **See Appendix D.**

❖ HIRING PANEL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST / MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIPS

- Once the list of applicants is known, each panel member should immediately review the list and identify any applicants that are known to the panel member.

- If the previous relationship with an applicant would render a panel member unable to remain objective, the member is asked to let the Hiring Panel know that they are unable to move forward as a member of the selection panel; the panel member is under no obligation to report the specific nature of the relationship.

- Previous experience with an applicant does not automatically mean that the panel member could not remain objective (e.g., formerly mentored or supervised the applicant; attended the same graduate institution as the applicant); it can be helpful for panel members to state these previous relationships with the full panel to help each other

identify blind spots or sources of potential bias. (**If there is a conflict of interest that becomes known at any stage of the hiring process, it must be disclosed and any feedback in scoring materials about the candidate be removed**).

THE INTERVIEW

- At least one member of the hiring panel should monitor timing to ensure each candidate does not exceed the amount of allotted interview time.
- Hiring panel members should score each area and calculate total score prior to discussing interview responses and associated scores.
- Hiring panel members should offer all applicants the option of using a pen and a paper to write down notes and/or questions if needed.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

❖ POST-INTERVIEW REVIEW AND SELECTION

- At the beginning of the post-interview meeting, the hiring panel should: restate the job description, the desired skill set of the incumbent, and restate a charge for panel members to focus on recruitment of qualified diverse and under-represented minority applicants.
- Hiring panel may choose to have a brief discussion about unconscious bias and implicit bias.
- All panel members will provide panel their scores at this time.
- Prior to discussion, a panelist should compute the average total score for each applicant
  - **It may be necessary to remind panel members to refrain from discussing scores and immediate reactions to the interviewees until the final scores have been tallied.**
- After average total scores are computed, the panel should disclose the rank order of candidates based on average total score and discuss each candidate prior to voting to approve the selection of the highest ranked candidate.
- When candidates are being discussed, the panel should spend equal time discussing each applicant; appoint a member to monitor time allotment for discussion on each applicant. After discussion, the panel lead will call a vote for "in favor" of selecting the candidate with the highest average total score.
- Majority vote of "in favor" will result in selection of candidate with highest average total score.
- In the case of majority vote "against" the highest scored candidate, the panel will move on to the next highest scored candidate and vote for their selection into the position. This process will repeat until a majority vote of "in favor" is reached.
- In the case a panel vote is equally split, the hiring manager will break the split and

decide on the selection of the candidate based on factors such as qualified diverse and under-represented minority status, highest average total score, etc., or will pursue vote of next highest scored candidate.

- If the panel does not have an "in favor" vote of any candidate, they may decide to re-start the candidate search process in favor of a desirable candidate.

- The panel lead (hiring official or designee) will communicate with Human Resources and/or the recruiter about panel selection/decision.

- All rating forms and voting tallies will be maintained by the hiring manager, chief of service, or designee, and should be permanently retained for reference.

APPENDIX A

DIVERSITY-RELATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In addition to domains and related questions developed by each hiring panel, the following diversity-related interview questions can be used to supplement the DEI component of the interview. These have been collected from VA staff and departments, the VA Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), informational interviews with recruiters, and internet research.

Level I

- **Frontline staff**, those who do not supervise others.

Level II

- **Supervisors, team leaders, work unit leaders**, those who lead the work of a natural group of people, either temporarily (process improvement team leader), or as an ongoing role (foreman, section leader).

Level III

- **Mid-level managers** are generally those who supervise Level II staff or division, department, or service line managers. Level III staff are those in charge of a major function in an organization.

Level IV

- **Executive leaders,** those responsible for the overall functioning and outcomes of the organization.

LEVEL	DEI QUESTIONS
I	In your opinion, what is the most challenging aspect of working in a diverse environment?
I	Please share with us what diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you and why they are important.
I	How would you handle a co-worker that was being culturally insensitive?
I	How important is diversity to you? What value does it bring?
I	What are your most important values?
I	Describe what you consider an ideal work environment.
I	What are ways you feel included in your work community?
II	Working with people from different backgrounds or cultures can present challenges. Describe a time where differences in background made communication challenging. How did you handle this situation?
II	What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse working environment? What specific steps have you taken to meet this challenge?
II	Please share an example that demonstrates your respect for people and their differences, and how you've worked to understand perspectives of others?

II	How do you handle communicating with people who speak English as not being their primary language? Provide an example of a time you communicated an issue to an individual who spoke English as a second language. What was the outcome?
II	What does social justice mean to you? How do you incorporate this principle in your work?
II	What tools/techniques do you bring for promoting collaboration among underrepresented groups?
II	What is your approach to understanding the perspectives of co-workers/colleagues from different backgrounds?
II	If selected for this position, what steps will you take to eliminate bias in your role as a VA employee?
II	How would you approach advocating for a more diverse and inclusive working environment with a colleague who downplayed its importance?
II	What do you see as the fundamental characteristics of organizations that create an inclusive environment?
II	How do you define "diversity, equity, and inclusion" from a professional perspective?
II	What conversations you've had, or actions you've taken about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, do you feel proud of in your professional life?
III	Describe your understanding of diversity and inclusion and how it might be related to this position.
III	Can you give an example of how you made your employees feel a sense of inclusion, belonging and/or equity daily?
III	What will you do to promote a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion in your work area?
IV	Working with people from different backgrounds or cultures can present unique opportunities for collaboration and creativity. Describe a time where a project or decision you made was enhanced by including diverse perspectives.
IV	VA has a diverse workforce (in terms of ethnicity, class, culture, language, sexual orientation, and disabilities). Can you tell us about your experience working with, and serving, such a diverse population?
IV	Please describe experiences you have had leading diversity, equity, and inclusion outreach activities (e.g., developing and leading workshops, providing consultation to departments).

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE RATING CRITERIA

Note: This is just an example; actual rating criteria can be different.

5	**Outstanding** Candidate's response demonstrates his/her/their outstanding experience, commitment and /or achievement in this area. They were able to clearly describe circumstances/situations, and his/her/their actions with specific positive outcomes. Shows passion or convincing evidence of abilities and interests. Leaves little room for improvement in answer.
4	**Highly Satisfactory** Better than average response; but not as well developed or convincing as Level 3.
3	**Average** Candidate possesses average skill and experience in this area. Has demonstrated average initiative and capacity with typical outcomes. Does what is expected, demonstrates normal/usual level of competence. Examples are not fully developed or are somewhat limited in scope.
2	**Unsatisfactory** Candidate fails to substantiate his/her/their possession of this skill. *Has limited experience.* Lacks complexity of assignments or organizational exposure, etc. Provides insufficient examples to support claims. Outcomes are unclear, offers little convincing evidence of abilities and interests.
1	**Poor** Candidate fails to substantiate his/her/their possession of this skill. *Has no experience.* Lacks complexity of assignments or organizational exposure, etc. Provides *no* examples to support claims. Outcomes are non-existent, offers no convincing evidence of abilities and interests.

APPENDIX C

HIRING CHECKLIST

☐	Create panel and ensure members complete required education
☐	Hiring manger / recruiter provides five performance-based interview questions and at least two questions that relate to diversity, equity, and inclusion (see "Pre-interview Meeting: Domains and Associated Questions"), along with candidate resumes, vacancy announcement, and position description to the hiring panel.
☐	Instruct hiring panel to review the applicant list to identify potential conflicts of interest.
☐	Prior to the commencement of interviewing, invite discussion amongst the panel about unconscious bias and implicit bias. You may consider defining these terms, sharing a video on the topic, and/or having a DEI Committee member meet with the panel to discuss unconscious bias.
☐	After interview, compute average of total scores, rank order of candidates appropriately. Directly ask panel members if there are ethical considerations or individual and/or group implicit bias perceived during the interview process
☐	Call a vote for "in favor" of selecting the candidate with the highest average total score.
☐	Communicate with HR about panel selection/decision.
☐	Collect all rating forms and voting tallies and forward to hiring manager or chief of service to be permanently retained.

APPENDIX D

PERFORMANCE-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTION EXAMPLES

LEVEL	TYPE	PBI Questions
I	Interpersonal Effectiveness	Describe a situation where you felt you had not communicated well. How did you correct the situation?
I	Personal Mastery	Describe a time when you received negative feedback and turned it into something positive.
II	Systems Thinking	In your current job, what organizational change have you made or contributed to that you are proud of? How did you go about making the change? What has been the impact of the change?
II	Organizational Stewardship	Describe a time when you worked as a member of a team to accomplish a goal of your organization. What role did you play? Describe how the team worked together. What was the outcome?
III	Creative Thinking	Tell me about a specific benchmark study that you assisted with and how that study was applied within your organization.
III	Customer Service	Tell me specifically how you have communicated to line staff that they have permission to go around the "chain of command" to expedite resolution of a patient problem. What has been the result of such communication? Success stories?
IV	Flexibility/ Adaptability	Describe a time when you were faced with an obstacle to an important project? What did you do? Were you able to overcome the obstacle? What step(s) did you take?
IV	Systems Thinking	Tell me about a specific decision that you made within your organization that had unexpected consequences outside your organization. How did you deal with those consequences?

Interview questions from **www.va.gov/PBI/questions.asp**

VA BEDFORD HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Veteran Integrated Service Network 1

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Bedford Healthcare System