

# Facilitator Guide for "Inclusiveness in Hiring" Committee Orientations (County-Based Positions)

It is important for Cooperative Extension hiring authorities to provide an orientation to "Inclusiveness in Hiring" for every search or hiring committee, including county-based, state-based, and administrative positions. While this facilitator guide may be useful for a range of hiring situations, it is primarily designed for use with county-based hiring committees. This facilitator outline is intended to highlight key message points to be discussed within the timeframe available for committee orientation prior to the commencement of the final interviews. While 30 minutes has historically been the timeframe for pre-interview committee preparation, hiring authorities are encouraged to consider options for expanding that timeframe by 10-15 minutes to allow time for the "inclusiveness in hiring" orientation to occur. Other options are also mentioned in the facilitator guide for your consideration. You are encouraged to adapt this script to meet the needs of the committee you are working with, and to use your own words so there is a more natural flow to this discussion.

## 1. Introductory remarks:

- Cooperative Extension is committed to building a diverse workforce. It is in the best interest of our organization, our partners, and the communities we serve. In addition we have obligations to ensure that all applicants receive fair and equal treatment and are protected against discrimination.
- As we prepare for interviews, it's important to begin this work by focusing on our goal of inclusion as well as our related legal obligations as a hiring team. The short video we will view provides an overview of the responsibility entrusted to each of us to ensure inclusiveness in the hiring process we are participating in today.
- Options:
  - A) The handout you received with the applicant materials will serve as a handy reference as we review key points. (Be prepared with copies in case there are committee members present who do not have the handout.)
  - OR B)** The handout I am passing around serves as a handy reference as we briefly review key points.

## 2. [Show video](#). (Length is 4:28 including video credits). [Be aware that the credits take about a minute to play at the end.]

- (Note to hiring authority/facilitator: The video identifies three areas that "the CE representative leading today's meeting" will discuss with the interview committee. These include a) how the laws apply to your process; b) actions to ensure equitable representation in the applicant pool; and c) potential sources of bias and how to prevent unlawful discrimination in the decision-making process. For county-based positions, the hiring authority/facilitator should prioritize discussion time on a) and c). Note that b) is less applicable at the time of final interviews because these actions have likely already occurred in advance of the final interviews.

## 3. Present the following key points:

### a. How these laws apply to your process:

- As hiring authority (or hiring facilitator) for this position, part of my role is to ensure that our process today is fair, does not discriminate against any candidate, and is legally defensible.
- This handout lists characteristics that by law cannot be used as a reason to eliminate a candidate from consideration, and gives examples of inappropriate questions. [Read off the interview reminders; the list of characteristics, and review some examples from the "inappropriate questions" column.]
- Here is an example of a question that is legal because it is job related: "This job requires evening and weekend work. Are you willing to work this schedule if needed?"
- The interview questions that have been prepared for today's interview have been written to make sure we are complying with these laws.
- Our hiring process also includes a pre-interview questionnaire which asks all candidates to verify that they have legal authority to work in the United States. Also, a criminal record review is a condition of employment.
- Please remember that it is important that we are consistent in asking the same questions of all candidates and that we evaluate all candidates based on the minimum and preferred qualifications and the position duties.

### b. Actions to ensure equitable representation in applicant pool:

- The steps leading up to today included a detailed recruitment plan designed to promote this position to a wide diversity of individuals in order to recruit a diverse pool of candidates. We promote our vacancies both within your local community and region, as well as through statewide and in some cases, national media outlets in an attempt to attract applicants currently underrepresented in Cooperative Extension's workforce.

- c. Review potential sources of bias and how to prevent unlawful discrimination in decision-making processes:
- As we begin, it is important to acknowledge that each of us has our own set of experiences and viewpoints that lead us to see or perceive things differently from one another. In this way, bias is a natural part of any hiring process. And in this way, different perspectives can be a good thing; one of the reasons we strive to get different viewpoints on interview committees is to ensure we evaluate candidates' strengths and limitations from different perspectives.
  - However, bias in the hiring process can present challenges when our biases limit our ability to openly and fairly consider an applicant's qualifications because we can't see beyond our own perspectives or opinions.
  - The back of the questions handout has a list of the perceptual biases that can interfere with sound decision-making as documented by those who research such things:

Common Types of Perceptual Biases in Decision-making:

- Give more weight to first impressions
  - Tend to weigh negative information more heavily than positive information
  - Believe a stereotype based on appearances, mannerisms or communication skills
  - Pay closer attention to or seek information consistent with our personal views
  - Tend to give more favorable reviews to information or individuals who are perceived to be more similar to us in terms of background or attitudes.
  - (Add your own examples based on your experiences.)
- You have all been involved in making decisions at one time or another, so I am curious if you've ever observed any of these perceptual biases in action? [facilitate a brief discussion to get 1 or 2 examples]
  - As I said earlier, bias is a natural part of any hiring process. The primary way we can limit any negative impacts is if we are aware of what our own personal biases might be. With this awareness, we are in a better position to recognize when our biases might be interfering with our ability to openly and fairly consider an applicant's qualifications.