

STATE PERSONNEL BOARD

Behavioral Interviewing Guide



Amy D. Whitten, J.D.
THE WHITTEN GROUP, PRINCIPAL

2004 EDITION

About the Author

Amy D. Whitten, J.D., is an attorney, law professor and consultant who lives in Oxford, Mississippi. A former Assistant Attorney General and state manager, Ms. Whitten received the Stennis Award for Excellence in State Government in 1991 and was selected by the Women Lawyers' Association as the Woman Lawyer of the Year in 2000. She serves as a permanent faculty member in both the Certified Public Manager Program and the Basic Supervisory Course and partners as a consultant to a number of state agencies. Ms. Whitten continues her public service as a member of the Board of Institutions of Higher Learning, which oversees Mississippi's 8 public universities and their over 65,000 students.

The author acknowledges and expresses appreciation to the many state managers and employees who contributed their knowledge and energy so enthusiastically to the completion of this Guide.



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*Behavioral
Interviewing
Guide*



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Author's Note

This manual is designed to provide information on behavioral interviewing, a technique supportive of competency based hiring practices. It is not designed to address fundamental issues of legality of interviewing or to replace the advice of agency counsel concerning the propriety of questions in particular cases.

Questions used in the interview process must be job related. Interviewers should consult with legal counsel to avoid discriminatory inquiries.

The reader is advised to seek counsel from agency attorneys or human resource professionals before relying on or utilizing the information contained in this manual.

Overriding questions concerning job interviewing for positions governed by the State Personnel Board should be sought from the Board's attorney. Further information on the state's laws with regard to employee selection is available from the following:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One:	
Overview of Competencies	1
Chapter Two:	
Competencies, Behavioral Interviewing, & Smart Hiring	7
Chapter Three:	
Behavioral Interviewing Process	9
Chapter Four:	
Pre-interview Planning	11
Chapter Five:	
Evaluating Answers to Behavioral-Based Questions	15
Chapter Six:	
Conducting the Interview	19
Taking Notes	20
Information Mining	20
Dealing with Difficult Interviewees	22
Chapter Seven:	
Testing	23
Chapter Eight:	
Background & Reference Checks	25
Chapter Nine:	
Post Interview	27
Distinguishing Among Applicants	28
Chapter Ten:	
Legal Considerations	29
Mississippi Employment Law	31
Conclusion	32

Appendix 1:	35
Behavioral Interviewing Planning Forms	37
Appendix 2:	39
Behavioral Interview Questions for	
Public Sector Core Competencies	41
Management Competencies	47
Appendix 3:	55
Mississippi State Personnel Board Core Competencies	57
Level One First Line Operational	58
Level Two Professional	60
Appendix 4:	63
Mississippi State Personnel Board Management Competencies	65
Level One First Line Supervisors	66
Public Sector Core Competencies	66
Management Competencies	68
Level Two Middle Management	69
Public Sector Core Competencies	69
Management Competencies	71
Level Three Upper Management	72
Public Sector Core Competencies	72
Management Competencies	74
Appendix 5:	77
Technical Competencies	79
Consultant Internal Process	79
Example and Behavioral Anchors	81

CHAPTER ONE

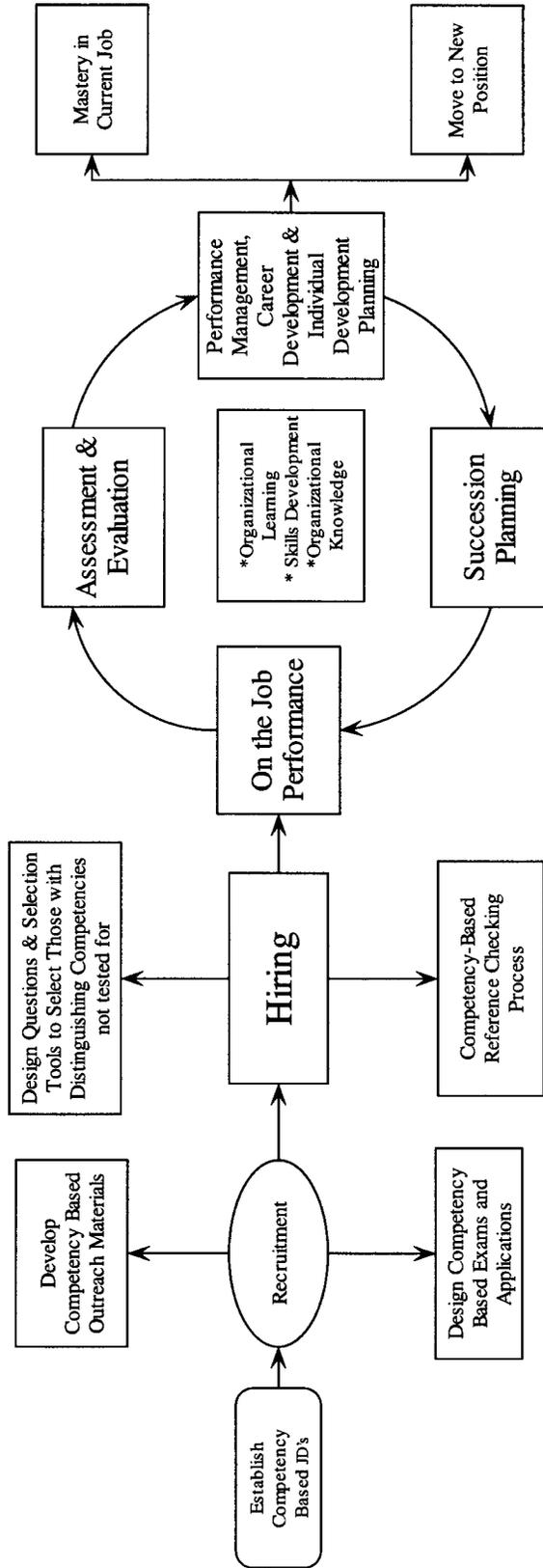
Overview of Competencies

The Mississippi State Personnel Board utilizes a competency model as part of its Quality Workforce Initiative (QWI). Competencies and behavioral anchors are integrated into job descriptions for every state job description and will form the base for innovations in employee development and performance management. Diagram 1 illustrates the overall scope of competency based workforce planning. The following is a brief overview of the competency model concept.

A competency is a skill, trait or behavior that leads to a desired, superior performance result. (See Table 1 on page 5 for a list of sample competencies.) A competency model defines the core competencies associated with outstanding performers and links the culture of an organization to job performance. A competency model attempts to clarify the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that make for successful performance in any job. The value of the model comes from the definition of each competency and its behavioral examples.

In the Personnel Board's model, competencies are aggregated into three areas – public service, management, and technical. Upon validation, the competencies will be prominently displayed in each job description with a clear identification of their role in employee performance in that position. Public Service Competencies are those competencies desired in every state employee. Integrity, service orientation, and accountability would be examples of such competencies. Management Competencies are assigned to various management and supervisory job classes and include areas such as working through others and results orientation. Technical Competencies are job or job class specific and will be melded into Mississippi's job descriptions through traditional subject matter validation whereby subject matter experts define the technical competencies for each job class.

DIAGRAM 1
COMPETENCY BASED WORKFORCE PLANNING



Within each competency family, a number of behavioral anchors specifically define how a competency is exhibited through behavior. In hiring employees, these anchors offer the interviewer greater focus in questioning and afford the candidate a clear understanding of the type behaviors he or she will be required to demonstrate.

The State Personnel Board has identified core public service and management competencies through the use of task forces. (*Those competencies identified by these groups appear in this manual as Appendices 3, page 55, and 4, page 63.*) The technical competencies will be defined over time and integrated into the state's 2000 plus job classes. (*Technical competencies have already been developed by several agencies, however, and samples appear in Appendix 5, page 77.*)

The definition of performance competencies enriches the employment experience in a number of ways. It affords job incumbents and new employees the opportunity to visualize what is expected of them, to assess themselves against an ideal model, and to develop a plan of action that will help to reduce the gap between current performance and ideal performance. Equal value is afforded the employer in the areas of employee selection, development, evaluation, and performance improvement. Competencies form a more accurate vocabulary for conveying an organization's expectations to its employees. They further offer the employee a clear picture of a career path based on performance.

One of the best reasons to adopt the competency model is because it makes use of the top or best performers in an organization. It makes more concrete what the top performers already know, and helps develop a model for personal and professional development that can be easily used by other levels of performers to reach higher levels of performance (*LeBleu & Sobkowiak, 1995*).

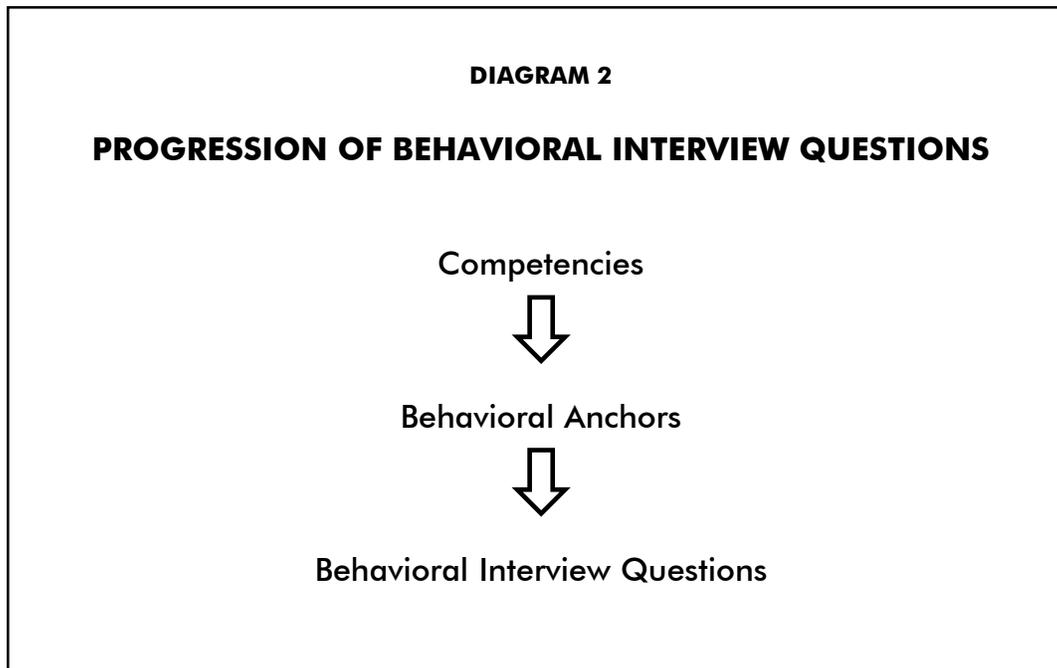
Analytical Thinking	Budgeting and Forecasting	Change Management
Creativity, Innovation	Entrepreneurship	Customer Relations*
Decision Making	Diversity Management	Facilitation
Interpersonal Relations	Group Participation	Leadership
Learner Agility	Organizational Design	Performance Management
Planning	Political Savvy	Process Management
Project Management	Problem Solving	Risk Management
Self Management*	Self Development*	Strategic Thinking
Strategic Management	Strategic Planning	Stakeholder Relations
Technical Proficiency	Communications*	Conflict Management
Emotional Maturity*	Staff Development	Resource Management*
Results Oriented*	Priority Management	Team Building
<i>* Core Public Sector or Management Competencies currently identified by SPB</i>		

CHAPTER TWO

Competencies, Behavioral Interviewing and Smart Hiring

The concept behind behavioral interviews is that one's past performance is the best predictor of future performance. Interviewers ask for specific examples of specific events (including events with both positive and negative outcomes) in order to draw a conclusion as to how a candidate would perform in a similar situation in their organization. Many experts believe that behavioral interviews offer the best opportunity for candidates to showcase their accomplishments and for interviewers to hire the best individual for the job (Grosse 2002). Behavioral interview questions give the interviewer the opportunity to determine whether or not candidates have previously demonstrated the competencies required for the job.

Behavioral interviewing affords an organization the opportunity to make core competencies visible in the hiring spectrum as they define the areas of questioning. As shown in Diagram 2, the identification of competencies leads to the identification of relevant behavioral anchors, which in turn spawn useful behavioral interview questions.



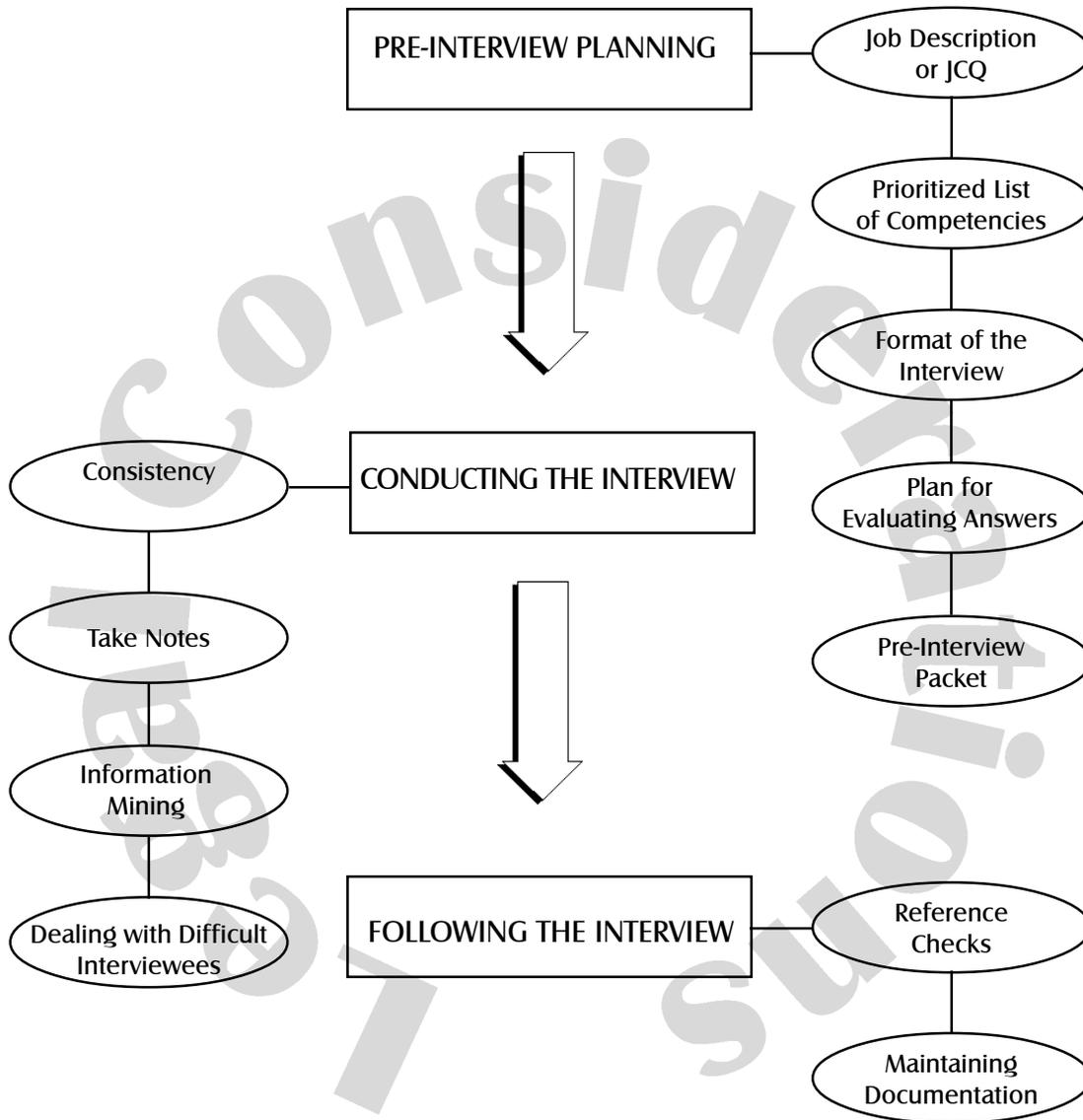
CHAPTER THREE

Behavioral Interviewing Process

The behavioral interviewing process consists of deliberate steps designed to hire the best person for a specific job. Diagram 3 shows the steps involved in the process.

DIAGRAM 3

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING PROCESS



CHAPTER FOUR

Pre-Interview Planning: Step by Step

Preparation is the key to conducting a successful behavioral interview. Typically, an interviewer will spend more time planning a behavioral interview than they will actually conducting the interview itself.

Step One

Have a well-written job description or Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ) that focuses on the competencies required to excel in the position you are interviewing for.

Step Two

Prioritize the competencies required for the job. Refer to the public sector core and managerial competencies developed by the Mississippi State Personnel Board (*Appendix III*).

Step Three

Design the format of the interview.

- Answer the questions below:
 - How many people will interview each job candidate?
 - If there will be multiple interviewers, will they interview the job candidate as a team or individually?
 - How much time will be allotted for each interview?
 - Where will the interview be held?
- Determine what competencies can be assessed without asking a question during the interview. Seek alternative sources for information such as the resume, a job skills test, or reference checks.
- Develop job-related, behavioral-based questions to assess the most important competencies required to be successful in the position (*see examples of questions in Appendix 2, page 39*).

Step Four

Develop a plan for evaluating job candidates' answers (*see Evaluating Answers to Behavioral Questions, Chapter 5, page 15*).

Step Five

Send out a pre-interview packet to job candidates.

- The packet should consist of:
 - Confirmation of the interview's time and place
 - Directions to the interview site
 - Number of interviewers
 - Explanation of behavioral-based interviews and how they will be expected to answer the behavioral-based questions
 - Information about the company

- Many argue that the job candidate should be getting this information on their own. In our competitive marketplace, job candidates are interviewing the employer as much, or maybe more than, the employer is interviewing the candidate. Remember that this pre-interview packet is a part of recruiting potential employees.

CHAPTER FIVE

Evaluating Answers to Behavioral-Based Questions

During the pre-interview planning, interviewers should develop a plan for evaluating the responses to interview questions and other job-related criteria. In assessing the sufficiency of answers to questions such as those posed during a behavioral interview, the interviewer may desire to utilize the **STAR** method.

In the **STAR** Method, an answer is assessed for including a clear statement of:

- **S**ituation or **T**ask
- **A**ction Taken
- **R**esult or Outcome

In other words, the interviewer expects an answer to a behavioral question to specifically describe a situation or task relevant to the question, to clearly express the action taken, and to succinctly summarize a result or outcome. The **STAR** Method provides a useful frame for considering the worth of an answer.

To further clarify the quality of answers provided by job candidates, the interviewer should define the best and worst answer elements prior to the interview. Pre-determination of the answer elements support consistent evaluation among all interviewers. Interviewers are able to determine which of the elements were present in the candidates answer, thereby determining whether the answer should be considered good or bad, based on the needs of the organization. See the example in Table 2.

Some agencies and/or interviewers may prefer to numerically rank job candidates based on their qualifications and responses to questions. In this instance, a rating scale can be designed that will allow interviewers to assign rankings based on pre-determined criteria. See the examples below. These are only a few examples of how an organization could design a numerical rating scale to use in the interviewing process.

Table 2	
Competency: Accountability	
Question One: How do you ensure that your work is accurate and consistent?	
Elements of the "best" answer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Follow company and/or equipment guidelines ○ Concentrate on the task at hand ○ Double check / Perform quality checks ○ Have others review periodically 	Elements of the "worst" answer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expect company / supervisor to report problems ○ Always accurate (with no explanation of how that is monitored) ○ Does not monitor ○ Rely ONLY on customer complaints to monitor

In the 2 examples below, assume that there are a maximum number of points available for a specific job. The candidates with the highest number of points are expected to be most suited for that given job.

Example One

If a person has a Bachelor's degree they may receive 3 points. If they have an Associate's degree, they would receive 2 points. And, if they do not have a degree, they receive 1 point in the education category.

Example Two

Using the example above of the “best” and “worst” answer elements, if the candidate’s answer contains all of the “best” elements, they would receive 3 points. If the answer contained 2 to 3 of the “best” elements, they would receive 2 points. If the answer contained 1 of the “best” elements, they receive 1 point.

In contrast, on the “worst” answer elements side, if the candidate’s answer contains all of the “worst” answer elements, 3 points could be subtracted from their overall score. And then additional points would be subtracted inline with the “best” elements above.

In Example Three, assume that certain competencies have been deemed more important than others to the success of a candidate in the given job.

Example Three

The position being interviewed for is in payroll, requiring high levels of confidentiality and accounting capability. While other competencies may be required, these are the most important for this position. Therefore, questions related to technical accounting competencies and integrity and honesty are given higher point values than other questions. Questions related to these competencies may count for double or even triple the point values of other questions.

The method of evaluating candidates should be designed to meet the requirements of the specific position, as well as the agency itself. The pre-determined method should be used uniformly throughout the interview process. In Appendix I, forms are provided to aid interviewers in planning the interview and evaluating responses during the interview. Blank and sample forms are provided for your reference in Appendix I. Electronic copies of the blank planning form can be downloaded from the State Personnel Board’s website at <www.spb.state.ms.us>.

CHAPTER SIX

Conducting the Interview

All interviews for a position should be consistent. This means that even though it may not be the same interviewer or job candidate, the same competencies should be addressed, the same overall questions should be asked, and each answer should be evaluated by the same criteria. A properly completed Behavioral Interview Planning Form (see Appendix I) provides the information needed to make each interview consistent.

The 20/80 Rule applies during a behavioral-based interview. The 20/80 Rule says that 20% of the talking during the interview should come from the interviewer. The other 80% should come from the job candidate as they respond to the behavioral questions. As the candidate responds to each question, the interviewer(s) should take notes. The interviewer should also remember to practice good listening and observation skills throughout the interview.



TAKING NOTES

Interviewers should not rely on their memories for interview notes for two reasons:

- 1) What seems perfectly clear during an interview can quickly be forgotten or confused, especially after multiple interviews.
- 2) For legal reasons, all employee selections should be documented. Documentation made at the time of the interview carries more weight than documentation created at a later time.

Stating that the interviewer will be taking notes during the interview lets the candidate know that all of their knowledge, skills, and abilities will be captured, as well as keeps note taking from catching them off-guard. The candidate's key responses should be summarized, omitting any personal notes regarding the candidate. The Behavioral Interview Planning Form (see Appendix I) providing space for note taking during the interview.



INFORMATION MINING

During the course of a behavioral-based interview, it may become apparent that critical portions of the answer are missing. If this issue surfaces, the interviewer should "dig deeper" using follow-up questions. It is important that the interviewer does not move onto the next main question until enough information is obtained to evaluate a candidate's competency in each area. Some examples of follow-up questions are in Table 3.

Table 3 Examples of Follow-up Questions	
And what was your role in the project, situation, solution, etc. that you just described?	How do you feel about the situation now?
And then what happened?	What did you learn from the situation, process, etc.?
How did you feel about that at the time?	What did you say then?
What was your first reaction?	How were you able to come up with the idea you just described?
Specifically what did you do (as a member of the team) that resulted in success?	Can you walk me through that?
Can you tell me what the exact words were?	

At some point, every interviewer will have to deal with a difficult interviewee. Table 4 offers a short description of “difficult interviewees” and ways to effectively deal with them.

All interviews should be concluded with “Next Steps.” These include: how the candidates will be evaluated, if there will be a second round of interviews, when the candidate can expect to hear back from the agency, and any follow-up information the candidate needs to provide to the interviewer/agency.

Table 4
Dealing with Difficult Interviewees

Type of Difficult Interviewee	Characteristics	Ways to Deal with the Interviewee
"Jumpy Jamie"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncomfortable with the types of questions that will be or have been asked • Uncomfortable with the expectations of types of answers set forth at the beginning by the interviewer • General nervousness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the types of questions that you will ask and set forth clear expectations of the answers you require to assess the candidates "fit" for the job • Let the candidate know that using this type of interview will allow you to get to know them, the things they have done in their careers, and how they have dealt with different types of situations • Reward the candidate when they give a good behavioral event (i.e., "That's exactly the kind of information I am looking for")
"Rambling Robbie"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key points of answers are not clear • Rambles • Digresses to topics unrelated to behavioral events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct candidate back to the behavioral event (i.e., "That is interesting, but we have a lot more ground to cover. Can we get back to the incident? You were saying that...") • Get the candidate to identify the key point of his answer by saying, "What was it about the situation that was a high/low point to you?" or "Tell me about one of the conversations or meetings that stand out in your mind?"
"Spewing Sam"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives too much information • Talks too fast • Does not organize answers so that they are understandable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the candidate walk through the event step-by-step (i.e., "I'm not sure I understand that sequence. Could you walk me through it?") • Help the candidate pace themselves. Can say, "I'd like to slow down a bit. Could you go back to...." • Ask the candidate to compress information by focusing on the key points of the event. (i.e., "We have a lot of information to cover during the interview so I would like for you to focus on the main points of the events you are describing.")
"At a Loss Andy"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't remember specific events • Cannot remember actual words or phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain silent long enough for the candidate to recall an event • If they absolutely cannot think of a specific event, direct them to another topic by saying, "Can you think of a situation involving some other activity that you haven't given me an example of yet?" • If they cannot remember actual words or phrases allow them to give you an overview (i.e., "Just give me the flavor of it. What sort of thing did you say?")
"Philosophical Frankie"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answers are vague • Discusses hypothetical situations • Talks about the philosophy of doing the job versus behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct the candidate to actual events by asking, "What did you actually do or say?"
"Evasive Aaron"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evasive • Refuses to answer questions because they don't want to reveal confidential information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use phrases like, "I don't need any names. Just tell me what happened" or "I'm only interested in what happened and your part in it" • Ask follow-up questions to probe for more information

CHAPTER SEVEN

Testing

Pre-employment tests are defined as “any standardized device that is administered in oral, paper-and-pencil, computerized, or any other medium and which yields a score, rating, description, or category” (Rose, 1993). Testing is an important part of the hiring process but must be utilized legally.

Key points include:

■ Job Relatedness

It is critical that any test utilized be job related, a conclusion which should be reached only through an objective job analysis.

■ Validity

The validity of tests will include not only the job relatedness inquiry, but also the integrity of the test methodology, its conclusions, and scoring or rating. This factor, too, should be objectively determined by an expert in the field.

■ Consistent Application

If a test is determined as a part of the hiring process, it must be administered to every applicant for that position. Managers may not make assumptions in the use of the tests or exclude anyone from its administration. It is equally important that the test be administered across lines, i.e. by all supervisors who interview for the same position, if it is to be used at all.

■ Non-Discriminatory Effect

When used over time, tests should be reviewed to assure that they are not having a disproportionate negative impact on protected groups.

Testing is a growing part of the hiring process and will likely increase in the future with the growth of test data banks and research. While useful, however, tests should be carefully used and guided by the organization's Human Resources department.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Background and Reference Checks

In today's world, reference and background checking are essential tools in assuring a sound hire. They are also important in protecting an organization from claims of negligent hiring. Properly used, these checks play a vital role, along with behavioral interviewing, to create a well-rounded view of the applicant. Some key points are noted below.



BACKGROUND CHECKS

In Mississippi, many public employers are required to conduct background checks by statute. Without statutory authorization, however, such checks can still be made. It is important to obtain prior written authorization from the applicant. Criminal background checks are subject to the Federal Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and its requirements of notification and release. Generally, employers do not have access to the governmental criminal databases unless the check is mandated by law. Background checks should be conducted by trained HR personnel rather than interviewers unless the interviewer is trained and authorized by the organization to perform this role.



REFERENCE CHECKS

Similar, though generally more limited, to background checks, reference checks involve contacting someone, typically a former employer or supervisor, and inquiring about the applicant. Where references are to be checked, the applicant should be informed in advance that references will be checked and that hiring, if it occurs, will be subject to a satisfactory completion of the reference checks. Studies show that the higher you go in an organizational hierarchy, the more candid the reference information you will receive. Studies also show that open ended questions about employment history, job performance, and potential problems work best in reference inquiries.

Note: Reference and background checks implicate a number of laws and should be undertaken only with the support and guidance of the organization's HR professional.

CHAPTER NINE

Post Interview

After the interview, references should be checked on all qualified candidates. Many companies will only verify dates of employment when calling for a reference. However, additional conversation may be induced with the information learned during the candidate's interview. For example, if a candidate mentioned a specific project during the interview, you can mention that project when checking the reference. Because the reference feels that the candidate disclosed information about the project, further conversation may be prompted about that project or others. It is important to remember that no discriminatory questions should be asked during the reference check (see Legal Considerations section).

Once all of the information is collected (references, interview notes, any applicable test scores or certifications, etc.) job candidates should be evaluated consistently on objective, job-related standards. As each candidate is evaluated, the interviewer(s) should be able to articulate job-based reasons for, or against, hiring that specific candidate. This information should be documented and kept on file with other human resource information.

In addition to reasons for or against hiring a job candidate, the organization should also document the following:

- Date, time, place, and length of interview
- Names, addresses, job titles, race, and sex of interviewers
- Credentials and experience that qualifies each panel member to serve on the panel
- Distribution of interview scores among candidates
- Training provided to the interviewers as well as their background in personnel selection interviewing
- Interview format, interview guides, rating scales and criteria, and other materials used by panelists.



DISTINGUISHING AMONG APPLICANTS

A particularly critical part of the hiring process occurs after interviews are completed and employers begin to differentiate among applicants. This manual does not provide advice on the manner in which this process should be conducted other than to point out the importance of:

- Objective job-related criteria
- Consistent neutral application of the criteria to every candidate
- Uniform application of every aspect of a criterion to every candidate
- Documentation that supports a job-related, non-discriminatory basis for the hiring decision.

CHAPTER TEN

Legal Considerations

Federal Employment Law applies to all public and private employers with more than 15 employees and prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of age (beginning at age 40), sex, disability, ethnic origin, religious preference or affiliation, and marital status. See Table 5 for specific employment related Federal Legislation.

TABLE 5
Federal Legislation
Related to Employment

- Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Age Discrimination in Employment Act

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the employment selection process generates more charges of discrimination than any other area of employment practice. As a general rule, interviewers should avoid any inquiry that is designed to elicit information as to race, color, ancestry, age, sex, religion, disability, marital, family, or political affiliation. However, the following should be given close attention during the interviewing process:

- Develop a written job description which clearly articulates the essential elements of the job
- Establish valid, job-related criteria which are as objective and measurable as possible
- Find qualified and diverse applicants by casting your recruitment net as far and wide as possible
- Evaluate all applicants by the same criteria
- Never make prohibited pre-employment inquiries
- Safe questions are those that are clearly job-related
- Establish and retain documentation which supports the selection or rejection of every applicant.



MISSISSIPPI EMPLOYMENT LAW

Employment law in Mississippi protects applicants for positions in State government from discrimination on the same qualities as Federal legislation. In addition, Mississippi law protects against political discrimination. In addition, the Mississippi State Personnel Board enforces policies and procedures relating to hiring practices. The laws are ultimately enforced by the Mississippi Employee Appeals Board which is an independent tribunal organized as part of the State Personnel Board. State laws relating to employee selection practices may be accessed through the Personnel Board's website at <www.spb.state.ms.us>.

Conclusion

This Manual seeks to provide the interviewer with a solid overview of the role competency based behavioral questions can play in a structured interview. The information provided, while far from comprehensive, serves to illustrate the value of probing potential performance through analysis of past performance.

An agency desiring to adopt this model should first assure that

- Interviewers are fully trained on legal and effective interview practices
- HR staff are fully engaged in insuring consistency of the interview practices
- Legal staff are consulted to determine the legality of questions
- Candidates are fully informed of the role and format of the interview.

Appendices

Appendix I

Behavioral Interview Planning Form

Behavioral Interview Planning Form		
Interviewees Name	Interviewer (s)	
Interview Date		
Position Interviewing For		
Competency:		
Question One:		
Elements of the "best" answer:	Elements of the "worst" answer:	
Situation or Task	Action Taken	Result or Outcome
Notes:		
Question Two:		
Elements of the "best" answer:	Elements of the "worst" answer:	
Situation or Task	Action Taken	Result or Outcome
Notes:		

Competency:		
Question One:		
Elements of the "best" answer		Elements of the "worst" answer
Situation or Task	Action Taken	Result or Outcome
Notes:		
Question Two:		
Elements of the "best" answer		Elements of the "worst" answer
Situation or Task	Action Taken	Result or Outcome
Notes:		

Appendix 2

Behavioral Interview Questions for Public Sector Core Competencies and Management Competencies



Behavioral Interview Questions

The following lists do not constitute exhaustive questions relating to the established competencies. Good additional behavioral questions may be developed through analysis of the competency language in the job description.

Questions for Public Sector Core Competencies

INTEGRITY AND HONESTY

1. Have you ever worked for a public organization? If so, tell me why that agency exists? How does it serve the public?
2. Tell me about a situation when you were asked to do something that you thought was a conflict of interest. How did you deal with the situation?
3. You notice a co-worker is taking the sweetener packets out of the break room at work for his/her personal use at home. What do you do?

WORK ETHIC

4. Tell me about a last minute assignment that put you under a short deadline. How did you accomplish the task on time? How accurate was your end result?
5. After being given an assignment, how do you prepare to “tackle” the assignment?
6. Tell me about a time that you exceeded a co-worker or boss’ expectations.
7. It is thirty minutes before the end of the official work day. You have just finished a large project. What do you do in those last thirty minutes of the day?
8. Tell me about a time when you were asked to complete a task that you didn’t know anything about. How did you complete the task?
9. Describe a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.
10. You have a co-worker who is on a deadline for a project. It is almost five o’clock and you are ready to

walk out the door. The co-worker asks you to stay and help her finish up her project. How do you react?

11. Tell me about the most challenging task you have ever been faced with. What did you do to meet that challenge?

SERVICE ORIENTATION

12. Tell me about a time when you exceeded a customer's expectations. How did it make the customer feel? How did it make you feel?

13. Tell me about a time that you had to go out of your immediate network/job duties to help a customer.

14. Tell me about the worst customer you ever had and how you dealt with him/her.

15. Tell me about a time that a customer came to you angry (not necessarily at you) and how you worked with that customer to solve the issue.

16. Describe the steps you would take if a customer came to you with a problem you could solve at your job level.

17. Describe the steps you would take if a customer came to you with a problem that was beyond your knowledge and/or responsibilities.

18. Why is follow-up important in customer service?

19. A customer comes in with a small request. The small request is not a priority for you but you realize that they have the potential to use your services extensively in the future. How do you ensure that the customer has a good experience and will want to come back to you in the future?

20. Describe a situation where you were given exceptional customer service. What made it stand out?

21. Give me an example of when you were given special recognition or acknowledgment for going the extra mile to satisfy a customer.

22. Describe a situation when you took a stand for a customer.

23. Have you ever had a customer get angry at something that wasn't your fault? If so, please explain.

24. Describe the steps you would use to calm an angry customer.

25. Describe a recent situation when you didn't know with whom you needed to speak with in an organization to get something done. What did you do?

COMMUNICATION SKILLS/STYLES

26. Have you ever worked with a person whose first language was something besides English or that had a disability that inhibited your ability to understand them? If so, please explain how you overcame the situation.
27. Tell me about how you communicate with your current supervisor concerning project process, concerns, and suggestions.
28. One of your co-workers has a "trait" or habit that affects his relationships with other co-workers and customers. It is a difficult trait to mention but you feel it must be brought to his/her attention. How do you handle the situation?
29. Your supervisor has given you instructions to complete a project. You are not clear as to some of the details of the instructions. What do you do?
30. Your department is working on an important project. During the course of the project, you recognize a potential problem with its implementation. What do you do? During the course of this same project, you have an idea that has the potential to improve the project but you are in a lower level position that may not get respect from upper management. What do you do?
31. Describe how you handle rude, difficult, or impatient people.
32. Describe a recent situation in which you asked for advice.
33. Describe a recent situation in which you asked for help.
34. If you had a project due and a co-worker wanted to talk about something else, what would you do?

SELF DEVELOPMENT

35. Tell me about a time you had to learn a new skill in order to do your job.
36. Tell me about the most recent class or learning activity you participated in that was not a work requirement.
37. What is a subject, related to your job, which you would like to learn more about? Why?
38. After participating in a learning activity, how do you bring that knowledge back to the workplace?
39. Tell me about a time that you had to seek new ideas and approaches to allow you to complete a project.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

40. Tell me about a recent professional goal you set for yourself. What steps are you taking to reach that goal?
41. Tell me about a stressful work situation you have experienced and how you dealt with it.
42. Tell me about a time when you saw a potential conflict between yourself and another co-worker or between two of your co-workers. What did you do to help prevent the conflict?
43. Tell me about a time when you had to follow a superior's orders when you did not agree with them.
44. Tell me about a performance standard that you have set for yourself. For example, make 40 widgets in 4 hours without any mistakes or answer the phone by the second ring 9 out of 10 times. How are you working towards meeting that standard?
45. Tell me about a time that it was REALLY important to be focused on the task at hand but you kept getting interrupted. What did you do to ensure your focus was where it needed to be?
46. You are given outlined procedures to complete your job tasks but know that if you skip some of the formalities, you can complete your job more quickly. What do you do?
47. Describe a situation when you had to exercise a significant amount of self-control.
48. A fellow employee told you what his/her salary is and wants to know yours. How would you react and what would you do?
49. Tell me about a time that you were given an unwelcome assignment. What did you do?
50. Describe how you work under pressure. Do you anticipate problems effectively or do you just react to them?
51. Tell me about a time that you were given inadequate resources to get a job done. How were you able to complete the job?
52. Tell me about a team project you were involved in. What did you do to ensure the success of the team?
53. Tell me about the things you like about your current or most recent job.
54. Tell me what your least favorite part or parts are of your current or most recent job.
55. Your supervisor asks you to complete a task that you cannot stand doing. How do you react to him/her?

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

56. Tell me about a conflict you have had with a superior. How did you resolve the conflict? How did you work towards mending the relationship with that superior?
57. Tell me about a situation where you were involved in a conflict. What did you do to resolve that conflict?
58. Describe the types of people you get along with best and why.
59. Describe the types of people you have difficulty getting along with and why.
60. Tell me about your relationship with a co-worker who you work well with.
61. Tell me about your relationship with a co-worker who you do not have a good working relationship. What steps have you taken to improve that relationship?
62. You have a co-worker who is swamped with a huge project. He/She doesn't think there is a light at the end of a tunnel. What do you do to help him/her through the project?
63. You have 2 co-workers who have formed an "alliance" and seem to make work difficult for everyone. How do you handle the situation?
64. You are assigned to a team project with 2 co-workers that you do not particularly like. How do you manage to make the team project successful while dealing with your personal feelings towards the two?
65. Give me an example of a situation where you had difficulties with a team member. What, if anything, did you do to resolve the difficulties?
66. Describe your relationship with the people you work with.

ACCOUNTABILITY

67. At your current or most recent job, what tasks do you routinely perform? How do these tasks relate to the overall functioning of the organization?
68. Tell me about a time that you were assigned a very difficult task. What resources did you use to accomplish the task? How did you delegate your time to accomplish the task?
69. You are given one and a half hours to throw together a luncheon for a client meeting. How do you get the lunch ready in time?
70. Describe a complex problem you solved.

71. Tell me about a time you had to take responsibility for a mistake you made.
72. Describe the thought process you go through when faced with making a tough decision.
73. How do you show commitment to your current or most recent organization?
74. Tell me about how your current or most recent job fits into the organization and how it contributes to the overall mission of the organization.
75. You are responsible for ordering the supplies for your office. How do you ensure that you are using the state's assets in the most appropriate way?
76. Describe a work situation in which you weren't proud of your performance. What did you learn from the situation?
77. Describe a recent project in which you failed. What did you learn from this?
78. Describe how your current department is organized.
79. How do you ensure that your work is accurate and consistent?

Questions for Management Competencies

These questions, used in conjunction with the previous questions, can be useful in interviewing for supervisory and management positions.

SELF MANAGEMENT

1. Tell me about the professional organizations in which you are currently involved.
2. Have you ever served on a committee or as an officer of a professional organization? If yes, please explain the position and the duties.
3. What have you gotten out of being involved in professional organizations?
4. How do you keep current on what's going on in your field?
5. What books and magazines have you read or classes you have taken to keep abreast of what's new in your field?
6. What learning activities have you been involved with since college/high school?
7. In what ways have you invested in yourself to improve your performance?
8. Give me an example that illustrates how other people have used you as a resource for knowledge in your field.
9. What are your future professional goals? How do you plan to achieve them? What might keep you from achieving them?
10. Tell me about a professional risk you took. What was the outcome?
11. Tell me about one of the most recent challenges you were subjected to. Were you able to turn it into an opportunity? Please explain.
12. Give me an example of when you were able to meet the personal and professional demands in your life yet still maintain a healthy balance.
13. Tell me what you would do if two of your co-workers had a personal problem between them that was interfering with your work. How would you handle it?
14. What's been the greatest influence on your career plans?

EMOTIONAL MATURITY

15. Give me an example of when you were able to apply a concept, theory or knowledge to a work problem or situation.
16. Describe a situation when you demonstrated initiative and took action without waiting for direction. What was the outcome?
17. Describe how something you learned made a significant difference on your career.
18. Give me an example of when you did not know enough about something to be effective. How did you handle it?
19. Describe the last time you had to make or implement a difficult decision that one or more people didn't like. How did you handle it? How did you handle their displeasure?
20. Tell me about a time when you were given a deadline by someone of higher authority which could not possibly be met. How did you handle it?
21. Tell me about a time you had to "choose your battles carefully."
22. Tell me about the time when someone has lost his/her temper at you in a business environment.
23. Describe situations you have been under pressure in which you feel you handled well.
24. Given a situation when you disagree with your supervisor, how would you deal with it?
25. Looking back now, is there anything that you could have done to improve your relationship with that one bad boss?
26. Please tell me a situation where you were in a dilemma to make a decision and how you dealt with it.
27. Tell me about a work situation in which you thought something wasn't "fair." What made it unfair? What would have made it "fair?"
28. Describe a recent situation that you just couldn't handle.
29. Tell me about your last situation with an unhappy customer. What did you do?
30. How would you handle an angry supervisor?
31. Describe how you felt when a team you were on wanted to make a decision that you didn't agree with.

32. Describe a recent situation in which you had to quickly establish your credibility and gain the confidence of others. What did you do?
33. Describe a time when you had to take on something very new or different and you had little or no guidance and support in doing do. How did you handle it?
34. Has competition had any positive or negative impact on your achievements? How?
35. How would you characterize your leadership and use of authority?
36. How would you deal with a subordinate who violated a company policy?

WORKING THROUGH OTHERS

37. You and your work team are given two hours to come up with a report on violence in the workplace, a subject you know very little about. You are given the job of team leader. How do you get the report done in 2 hours?
38. Describe how you would discipline a subordinate for inappropriate behavior.
39. Describe your proudest professional achievement that involved helping improve the performance of someone you supervised.
40. Assume you have received a job with a new company and are assigned to manage 15 to 20 people. Most of them are long-term employees with definite ideas about the "old way being the best way." Your assignment is to get these people to support wholesale changes going on in the company. Outline your plan for achieving their support and participation.
41. What have you done in the past to build rapport and relationships with people?
42. Give me an example of your ability to communicate effectively and build relationships with people regardless of cultural differences.
43. Tell me about a time when you had to conduct a particularly difficult employee counseling or corrective session. How did you prepare for the session? Did you delay having it? How long?
44. Give me an example of one of the most significant contributions you made as a member of a high performing team. What, in your opinion, made it a high performing team? Describe how you felt about the contributions of other team members.
45. Describe a situation where the team was having trouble agreeing on a decision and what you did to facilitate consensus.

46. Give me an example of when you were on a team that failed to meet its objectives. What could the team have done differently?
47. What role do you take in a group situation?
48. What would you do if some team members weren't doing their share of the work?
49. What are the most important qualities in a person who will supervise other people?
50. What would you do if one of your team members who was getting older began to be unable to handle his end of the very physical job your division has. How would you handle it?
51. As a department manager, how would you establish staff rapport?
52. Explain how you motivate others to work more efficiently.
53. How would you handle an angry co-worker?
54. You asked a co-worker to complete a task to help move a project forward. When they complete the task, they bring it to you for your approval. You see they have made a good effort but have completed it incorrectly. How do you handle the situation?

MACRO ORIENTED

55. Tell me about a change that has occurred in your current or most recent workplace. How did you cope with those changes? What did you do to facilitate those changes?
56. Tell me about the most difficult work-related change or project you've ever been through. Describe your role and your feelings about the change.
57. Give me an example of the most significant professional goal you have met. How did you achieve it? What were your obstacles? How did you overcome them?
58. Tell me about an instance where you represent your current or most recent organization to an outside entity.
59. Tell me about how you represent your current or most recent organization to your co-workers and internal customers.
60. Has your job ever changed because of reorganization? Please explain how you handled the situation.
61. Describe how you would discipline a subordinate for tardiness.

62. Describe how you would discipline a subordinate for missing work.

63. Describe how you would discipline a subordinate for missing a deadline.

RESULTS ORIENTED

64. What changes do you see your profession or industry making in order to stay competitive?

65. Give me an example of when you took a risk to achieve a goal.

66. Tell me about a time when you overcame great obstacles to achieve something significant.

67. Describe a recent situation in which it took several tries or approaches before you were able to figure out what was going on.

68. Describe projects that have required accuracy and attention to detail.

69. Finish this sentence: "Successful managers are the ones who....."

70. In relation to others, how do you grade yourself on taking initiative?

71. What organizational techniques do you use to manage your workload?

72. Describe the biggest change you have brought to your current company.

73. Tell me about a professional mistake or error you made. What was the outcome? What, if anything would you do differently? What did you learn from it?

74. How do you evaluate your own work? What do you do with the results of those evaluations?

75. Describe a situation when you were able to strengthen a relationship by communicating effectively. What made your communication effective?

76. Describe how your ability to communicate effectively and build relationships with many different types of people has contributed to one of your greatest accomplishments.

77. Give me an example of when you achieved something by your persistence that others couldn't.

78. Tell me about a time when you had a project or work due on a deadline and you got sick the night before it was due and weren't able to go to work the next day. How did you handle the situation?

79. Tell me about a time when you had two or more things which absolutely had to be completed on the same

day (multiple first priorities). How did you handle the situation?

80. If we contacted your current or most recent supervisor for reference comments, what do you think he or she would say about you?

Interpersonal Skills

81. Give me an example of a situation when you have demonstrated sensitivity to diversity issues.

82. Describe the ideal supervisor/employee relationship.

83. Give me an example of when you identified with someone else's difficulties at work. What, if anything, did you do to help them?

84. Give me an example of a time when a company policy or action hurt people. What, if anything, did you do to mitigate the negative consequences to people?

85. Describe a situation when you were criticized for being too concerned about the difficulties of others.

86. Describe a recent situation in which what was really going on with someone else was much more complicated than it might have seemed on the surface.

87. Describe how you go about mentoring an employee.

88. Tell me about a time when two people you supervised got "crossed up" and their upset spilled over into their work. How did you handle the situation?

89. Describe a recent situation when miscommunication created a problem on the job.

90. Have you prepared and communicated ideas and information in a formal setting? Please explain.

91. When have your verbal communications been important enough to follow-up in writing?

92. How have you developed your interpersonal skills?

93. How do you communicate with people at different levels?

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

94. Tell me about a time when an employee you supervised disagreed with you about a work issue and suggested an alternate way the issue might be addressed. How did you handle that?

95. When faced with layoffs, how would you decide who to let go?

96. Give me an example of when your ability to manage your time and priorities proved to be an asset.
97. What have you done in the past that demonstrates your commitment to continuous improvement?
98. How do you delegate responsibility?
99. How do you select the most appropriate candidate for a position?
100. Give me an example of when you had to make a decision in favor of your own self-interest or someone else's. What were your thoughts and feelings? What did you do?

Appendix 3

Mississippi State Personnel Board Core Competencies



DEFINITIONS OF LEVELS I AND II FOR PUBLIC SECTOR CORE COMPETENCIES

Level I – First Line Operational

Persons who occupy positions within this category typically provide direct task-oriented services, often at the front line level. Examples would include direct care workers, maintenance and repair workers, correctional officers, technicians, front line law enforcement personnel, lower level clerical personnel, and other persons who provide direct service but do not in any way direct policy or exercise more than basic discretion in the direction of their duties. Members of this level do not exercise supervisory or managerial authority.

Level II – Professional

Persons who occupy positions within this category provide professional and sometimes managerial services. Examples would include managers and supervisors at both Levels I and II. Additionally, professional staff such as attorneys, doctors, nurses, accountants/auditors, social workers, counselors, psychologists, and other similar positions would be included. Finally, technical staff at higher levels (such as engineer II and above, accountant/auditor II and above, upper levels of the administrative assistant class, etc.) might also be included where those jobs involve duties of a more complex nature than Level I.



GENERAL PUBLIC SECTOR CORE COMPETENCIES

Competencies and Behavioral Anchors for Level I First Line Operational

General Public Sector Core Competencies

1. Integrity and Honesty – Demonstrates a sense of responsibility and commitment to the public trust through statements and actions.
 - Models and demonstrates high standards of integrity, trust, openness and respect for others.
 - Demonstrates integrity by honoring commitments and promises.
 - Demonstrates integrity by maintaining necessary confidentiality.
2. Work Ethic - Is productive, diligent, conscientious, timely, and loyal.
 - Conscientiously abides by the rules, regulations and procedures governing work.
3. Service Orientation - Demonstrates a commitment to quality public service through statements and actions.
 - Seeks to understand and meets and / or exceeds the needs and expectations of customers.
 - Treats customers with respect, responding to requests in a professional manner, even in difficult circumstances.
 - Provides accurate and timely service.
 - Develops positive relationships with customers.
4. Accountability - Accepts responsibility for actions and results.
 - Is productive and carries fair share of the workload.
 - Focuses on quality and expends the necessary time and effort to achieve goals.
 - Demonstrates loyalty to the job and the agency and is a good steward of state assets.
 - Deals effectively with pressure and recovers quickly from setbacks.
 - Takes ownership of tasks, performance standards and mistakes.
 - Has knowledge of how to perform one's job.

5. Self-Management Skills - Effectively manages emotions and impulses and maintains a positive attitude.

- Maintains a positive attitude.
- Treats all people with respect, courtesy, and consideration.
- Communicates effectively.
- Remains open to new ideas and approaches, shows flexibility to complete job within defined parameters.
- Is able to lead and follow.
- Avoids conflicts of interest.
- Promotes cooperation and teamwork.

6. Interpersonal Skills - Shows understanding, courtesy, tact, empathy and concern to develop and maintain relationships.

- Demonstrates cross cultural sensitivity and understanding. Identifies and seeks to solve problems and resolve conflict situations.

7. Communication Skills - Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and expresses information to individuals or groups effectively.

- Receives other cues such as body language in ways that are appropriate to listeners and situations.
- Provides thorough and accurate information.
- Asks questions for clarification and to insure understanding.
- Takes into account the audience and nature of the information; listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues, and responds appropriately.
- May make oral presentations.

8. Self-Development - Adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.

- Is knowledgeable about the task.
- Remains open to change and new information and ideas.

Competencies and Behavioral Anchors for Level II Professional

General Public Sector Core Competencies

1. Integrity and Honesty – Demonstrates a sense of responsibility and commitment to the public trust through statements and actions.
 - Models and demonstrates high standards of integrity, trust, openness and respect for others.
 - Demonstrates integrity by honoring commitments and promises.
 - Demonstrates integrity by maintaining necessary confidentiality.
2. Work Ethic - Is productive, diligent, conscientious, timely, and loyal.
 - Conscientiously abides by the rules, regulations and procedures governing work.
3. Service Orientation - Demonstrates a commitment to quality public service through statements and actions.
 - Seeks to understand and meets and / or exceeds the needs and expectations of customers.
 - Treats customers with respect, responding to requests in a professional manner, even in difficult circumstances. Provides accurate and timely service.
 - Develops positive relationships with customers.
4. Accountability - Accepts responsibility for actions and results.
 - Is productive and carries fair share of the workload.
 - Focuses on quality and expends the necessary time and effort to achieve goals.
 - Demonstrates loyalty to the job and the agency and is a good steward of state assets.
 - Steadfastly persists in overcoming obstacles and pushes self for results.
 - Maintains necessary attention to detail to achieve high level performance.
 - Deals effectively with pressure and recovers quickly from setbacks.
 - Takes ownership of tasks, performance standards and mistakes.
 - Has knowledge of how to perform one's job.
 - Knows the organization's mission and functions and how it fits into state government.

5. Self Management Skills - Effectively manages emotions and impulses and maintains a positive attitude.
 - Encourages and facilitates cooperation, pride, trust, and group identity; fosters commitment and team spirit; works effectively and cooperatively with others to achieve goals. Maintains a positive attitude.
 - Treats all people with respect, courtesy, and consideration.
 - Communicates effectively.
 - Remains open to new ideas and approaches.
 - Avoids conflicts of interest.
 - Promotes cooperation and teamwork.
6. Interpersonal Skills - Shows understanding, courtesy, tact, empathy and concern to develop and maintain relationships.
 - Demonstrates cross cultural sensitivity and understanding. Identifies and seeks to solve problems and prevent or resolve conflict situations.
 - Encourages others through positive reinforcement.
7. Communication Skills - Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and expresses information to individuals or groups effectively.
 - Receives other cues such as body language in ways that are appropriate to listeners and situations.
 - Takes into account the audience and nature of the information; listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues, and responds appropriately. May make oral presentations.
 - Communicates ideas, suggestions and concerns as well as outcomes and progress throughout the process of an activity.
 - Provides thorough and accurate information.
8. Self-Development - Adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.
 - Seeks efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills; uses training, feedback, or other opportunities for self-learning and development.
 - Develops and enhances skills to adapt to changing organizational needs.
 - Remains open to change and new information and ideas.

Appendix 4

Mississippi State Personnel Board Management Competencies



DEFINITIONS OF LEVELS I, II AND III FOR MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

Level I - Front Line Supervisors

People at this level supervise workers who perform the work of the agency. They plan work duties, assign tasks, coach and motivate staff, and measure the performance of their employees. Examples include Direct Care Supervisors, upper levels of the Administrative Assistants series, Director I.

Level II - Middle Management

People at this level may manage front line supervisors as well as some employees performing the work of the agency or they may manage projects or programs. They may be responsible for selecting and training front line supervisors, managing and distributing some resources, and communicating across functional lines. Examples include Division Directors, Branch Managers, some Professional Classes such as upper levels of the Personnel Officer and Auditor series.

Level III - Upper Management

People at this level are mainly responsible for planning, organizing, and directing the agency's resources. They may be involved in long-range planning, staffing and budgeting. They may manage middle level managers. Examples include Bureau Directors and Office Directors.

**Please note that Executive Directors and Deputy Directors are not included in the descriptions and will not be considered in the competency identification.*



MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES DEFINED BY LEVEL

Competencies and Behavioral Anchors for Level I Front Line Supervisors

Public Sector Core Competencies

1. Integrity and Honesty - Demonstrates a sense of responsibility and commitment to the public trust through statements and actions.
 - Models and demonstrates high standards of integrity, trust, openness and respect for others.
 - Demonstrates integrity by honoring commitments and promises.
 - Demonstrates integrity by maintaining necessary confidentiality.
2. Work Ethic - Is productive, diligent, conscientious, timely and loyal.
 - Conscientiously abides by the rules, regulations and procedures governing work.
3. Service Orientation - Demonstrates a commitment to quality public service through statements and actions.
 - Seeks to understand and meets and/or exceeds the needs and expectations of customers.
 - Treats customers with respect, responding to requests in a professional manner, even in difficult circumstances.
 - Provides accurate and timely service.
 - Develops positive relationships with customers.
4. Accountability - Accepts responsibility for actions and results.
 - Is productive and carries fair share of the workload.
 - Focuses on quality and expends the necessary time and effort to achieve goals.
 - Demonstrates loyalty to the job and the agency and is a good steward of state assets.
 - Steadfastly persists in overcoming obstacles and pushes self for results.
 - Maintains necessary attention to detail to achieve high level performance.
 - Deals effectively with pressure and recovers quickly from setbacks.
 - Takes ownership of tasks, performance standards and mistakes.
 - Has knowledge of how to perform one's job.
 - Knows the organization's mission and functions and how it fits into state government.

5. Self Management Skills - Effectively manages emotions and impulses and maintains a positive attitude.
 - Encourages and facilitates cooperation, pride, trust, and group identity.
 - Fosters commitment and team spirit.
 - Works effectively and cooperatively with others to achieve goals.
 - Treats all people with respect, courtesy, and consideration.
 - Communicates effectively.
 - Remains open to new ideas and approaches.
 - Avoids conflicts of interest.
 - Promotes cooperation and teamwork.
 - Continuously evaluates and adapts; copes effectively with change.
 - Allows self and others to make mistakes and learns from those mistakes.
 - Adheres to high ethical standards.

6. Interpersonal Skills - Shows understanding, courtesy, tact, empathy and concern to develop and maintain relationships.
 - Demonstrates cross-cultural sensitivity and understanding.
 - Identifies and seeks to solve problems and prevent or resolve conflict situations.
 - Encourages others through positive reinforcement.
 - Expresses facts and ideas both verbally and in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner, helping others translate vision into action.
 - Models appropriate behavior.
 - Recognizes and develops potential in others; mentors.

7. Communication Skills - Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and expresses information to individuals or groups effectively.
 - Receives other cues such as body language in ways that are appropriate to listeners and situations.
 - Takes into account the audience and nature of the information.
 - Listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues, and responds appropriately.
 - May make oral presentations.
 - Communicates ideas, suggestions and concerns as well as outcomes and progress throughout the process of an activity.
 - Provides thorough and accurate information.

8. Self-Development - Adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.
 - Seeks efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills.
 - Uses training, feedback, or other opportunities for self-learning and development.

- Develops and enhances skills to adapt to changing organizational needs.
- Remains open to change and new information and ideas.

Management Competencies

1. Emotional Maturity - Conducts oneself in a professional, consistent manner when representing the organization.
 - Has the ability to work through adversity and hold self and others accountable for work actions.
2. Macro Oriented - Exercises good judgment, makes sound, well-informed decisions.
 - Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, and regulations related to specialized areas of expertise.
3. Working Through Others - Supports, motivates, and is an advocate for staff.
 - Reinforces and rewards team efforts and positive behaviors.
 - Is fair, yet firm with others.
 - Monitors workloads and provides feedback.
4. Results Oriented - Plans effectively to achieve or exceed goals, sets and meets deadlines.

Competencies and Behavioral Anchors for Level II Middle Management

Public Sector Core Competencies

1. Integrity and Honesty - Demonstrates a sense of responsibility and commitment to the public trust through statements and actions.
 - Models and demonstrates high standards of integrity, trust, openness and respect for others.
 - Demonstrates integrity by honoring commitments and promises.
 - Demonstrates integrity by maintaining necessary confidentiality.
2. Work Ethic - Is productive, diligent, conscientious, timely and loyal.
 - Conscientiously abides by the rules, regulations and procedures governing work.
3. Service Orientation - Demonstrates a commitment to quality public service through statements and actions.
 - Seeks to understand and meets and/or exceeds the needs and expectations of customers.
 - Treats customers with respect, responding to requests in a professional manner, even in difficult circumstances.
 - Provides accurate and timely service.
 - Develops positive relationships with customers.
4. Accountability - Accepts responsibility for actions and results.
 - Is productive and carries fair share of the workload.
 - Focuses on quality and expends the necessary time and effort to achieve goals.
 - Demonstrates loyalty to the job and the agency and is a good steward of state assets.
 - Steadfastly persists in overcoming obstacles and pushes self for results.
 - Maintains necessary attention to detail to achieve high level performance.
 - Deals effectively with pressure and recovers quickly from setbacks.
 - Takes ownership of tasks, performance standards and mistakes.
 - Has knowledge of how to perform one's job.
 - Knows the organization's mission and functions and how it fits into state government.

5. Self Management Skills - Effectively manages emotions and impulses and maintains a positive attitude.

- Encourages and facilitates cooperation, pride, trust, and group identity.
- Fosters commitment and team spirit.
- Works effectively and cooperatively with others to achieve goals.
- Treats all people with respect, courtesy, and consideration.
- Communicates effectively.
- Remains open to new ideas and approaches.
- Avoids conflicts of interest.
- Promotes cooperation and teamwork.
- Continuously evaluates and adapts; copes effectively with change.
- Allows self and others to make mistakes and learns from those mistakes.
- Adheres to high ethical standards.

6. Interpersonal Skills - Shows understanding, courtesy, tact, empathy and concern to develop and maintain relationships.

- Demonstrates cross-cultural sensitivity and understanding.
- Identifies and seeks to solve problems and prevent or resolve conflict situations.
- Encourages others through positive reinforcement.
- Expresses facts and ideas both verbally and in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner, helping others translate vision into action.
- Models appropriate behavior.
- Recognizes and develops potential in others; mentors.

7. Communication Skills - Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and expresses information to individuals or groups effectively.

- Receives other cues such as body language in ways appropriate to listeners and situations.
- Takes into account the audience and nature of the information.
- Listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues, and responds appropriately.
- May make oral presentations.
- Communicates ideas, suggestions and concerns as well as outcomes and progress throughout the process of an activity.
- Provides thorough and accurate information.

8. Self-Development - Adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.

- Seeks efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills.
- Uses training, feedback, or other opportunities for self-learning and development.
- Develops and enhances skills to adapt to changing organizational needs.
- Remains open to change and new information and ideas.

Management Competencies

1. Emotional Maturity - Conducts oneself in a professional, consistent manner when representing the organization.
 - Has the ability to work through adversity and hold self and others accountable for work actions.
 - Takes risk appropriate to ones level of responsibility.
 - Acts as a settling influence in a crisis.
 - Exhibits the ability to work through challenges and create opportunities.
2. Macro Oriented - Exercises good judgment, makes sound, well-informed decisions.
 - Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, and regulations related to specialized areas of expertise.
 - Understands effects of decisions on the organization and on other organizations.
 - Acts as a change agent by initiating and supporting change within the agency.
3. Working Through Others - Supports, motivates, and is an advocate for staff.
 - Creates effective teams; shows a willingness to get work done through others.
 - Clearly and comfortably delegates work, trusting and empowering others to perform.
 - Reinforces and rewards team efforts and positive behaviors.
 - Is fair, yet firm with others.
 - Monitors workloads and provides feedback.
4. Results Oriented - Plans effectively to achieve or exceed goals, sets and meets deadlines.
 - Identifies, analyzes, and solves problems.
 - Develops standards of performance and knows what and how to measure.
5. Resource Management - Acquires, effectively and efficiently administers, and allocates human, financial, material, and information resources.
 - Demonstrates ability to plan, prioritize, and organize.

Competencies and Behavioral Anchors for Level III Upper Management

Public Sector Core Competencies

1. Integrity and Honesty - Demonstrates a sense of responsibility and commitment to the public trust through statements and actions.
 - Models and demonstrates high standards of integrity, trust, openness and respect for others.
 - Demonstrates integrity by honoring commitments and promises.
 - Demonstrates integrity by maintaining necessary confidentiality.
2. Work Ethic - Exhibits a strong work ethic by being productive, diligent, conscientious, timely, and loyal.
 - Conscientiously abides by the rules, regulations and procedures governing work.
3. Service Orientation - Demonstrates a commitment to quality public service through statements and actions.
 - Seeks to understand and meets and/or exceeds the needs and expectations of customers.
 - Treats customers with respect, responding to requests in a professional manner, even in difficult circumstances.
 - Provides accurate and timely service.
 - Develops positive relationships with customers.
4. Accountability - Accepts responsibility for actions and results.
 - Is productive and carries fair share of the workload.
 - Focuses on quality and expends the necessary time and effort to achieve goals.
 - Demonstrates loyalty to the job and the agency and is a good steward of state assets.
 - Steadfastly persists in overcoming obstacles and pushes self for results.
 - Maintains necessary attention to detail to achieve high level performance.
 - Deals effectively with pressure and recovers quickly from setbacks.
 - Takes ownership of tasks, performance standards and mistakes.
 - Has knowledge of how to perform one's job.
 - Knows the organization's mission and functions and how it fits into state government.

5. Self Management Skills - Effectively manages emotions and impulses and maintains a positive attitude.
 - Encourages and facilitates cooperation, pride, trust, and group identity.
 - Fosters commitment and team spirit.
 - Works effectively and cooperatively with others to achieve goals.
 - Treats all people with respect, courtesy, and consideration.
 - Communicates effectively.
 - Remains open to new ideas and approaches.
 - Avoids conflicts of interest.
 - Promotes cooperation and teamwork.
 - Continuously evaluates and adapts, copes effectively with change.
 - Allows self and others to make mistakes and learns from those mistakes.
 - Adheres to high ethical standards.
 - Involved in professional organizations.

6. Interpersonal Skills - Shows understanding, courtesy, tact, empathy and concern to develop and maintains relationships.
 - Demonstrates cross-cultural sensitivity and understanding.
 - Identifies and seeks to solve problems and prevent or resolve conflict situations.
 - Encourages others through positive reinforcement.
 - Expresses facts and ideas both verbally and in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner, helping others translate vision into action.
 - Models appropriate behavior.
 - Recognizes and develops potential in others, leads others to life-long learning by example.

7. Communication Skills - Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and expresses information to individuals or groups effectively.
 - Expresses information to individuals or groups effectively, taking into account the audience and nature of the information.
 - Receives other cues such as body language in ways that are appropriate to listeners and situations.
 - Listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues, and responds appropriately.
 - May make oral presentations.
 - Communicates ideas, suggestions and concerns as well as outcomes and progress throughout the process of an activity.
 - Provides thorough and accurate information.

8. Self-Development - Adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.
 - Seeks efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills.
 - Uses training, feedback, or other opportunities for self-learning and development.
 - Develops and enhances skills to adapt to changing organizational needs.
 - Remains open to change and new information and ideas.

Management Competencies

1. Emotional Maturity - Conducts oneself in a professional, consistent manner when representing the organization.
 - Exhibits the ability to work through challenges and create opportunities.
 - Has the ability to work through adversity and hold self and others accountable for work actions.
 - Takes risks appropriate to one's level of responsibility.
 - Acts as a settling influence in a crisis.
 - Emulates proven leaders.
2. Macro Oriented - Exercises good judgment, makes sound, well-informed decisions.
 - Communicates organizational vision and understands effects of decisions on the organization and on other organizations as well as how external factors impact the organization.
 - Acts as a change agent by initiating and supporting change within the agency.
 - Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, and regulations related to specialized areas of expertise.
3. Working Through Others - Supports, motivates and is an advocate for staff.
 - Recognizes and appreciates diversity.
 - Creates synergistic teams using strengths of all team members.
 - Delegates effectively, sharing both responsibility and accountability.
 - Empowers employees and trusts others to perform without micro-managing.
 - Reinforces and rewards team efforts and positive behaviors.
 - Is fair, yet firm with others.

4. Results Oriented - Plans effectively to achieve or exceed goals, sets and meets deadlines.
 - Identifies, analyzes, and solves problems.
 - Develops standards of performance and knows what and how to measure.
 - Uses change management skills to bridge the gap between current and desired performances.
 - Pushes self and others for results.

5. Resource Management - Acquires, effectively and efficiently administers, and allocates human, financial, material, and information resources.
 - Demonstrates ability to plan, prioritize and organize.
 - Works to develop and implement strategic planning for the agency.
 - Assesses current and future staffing needs based on organizational goals and budget realities.
 - Recruits, develops and retains a diverse workforce.

Appendix 5

Technical Competencies

The Mississippi State Personnel Board and a number of agencies have begun the process of developing technical competencies for a number of job classes, including both agency specific and generic classes. Experience to date offers some guidance to the agency who desires to develop technical competencies or to benefit from the experience of others within state government.

NOTE: It is important to remember that if an agency develops its technical competencies, with or without outside facilitation, these competencies must be formally validated under a process developed and controlled by the State Personnel Board before they may be used for hiring or other job-related purposes.



TECHNICAL COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Consultant Internal Process

As the consultant, the process begins with a review of the current job description and the specific Job Content Questionnaires (JCQ's) for the individual jobs. In a series, every level is treated as a separate job in the initial review. Focus on the essential functions provides a good base for identification of possible competencies. Task or examples of work help to define the behavioral anchors. Review of job descriptions from other states using competency based system and related job classes that have been previously completed also provides valuable information.

A "strawman" list of competencies and behavioral anchors are prepared based on the information gained from the review of the above mentioned documents. During the development, keep in mind the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes needed for the position and those already addressed in the core public sector competencies and where applicable the management competencies.

Through experience with this process, several competencies and their definitions have been developed. This list of currently developed technical competencies with definitions is available on the SPB website for use by all agencies. There are also a number of behavioral anchors that have been developed by one agency and subsequently used by other agencies, either in whole or part. The behavioral anchors provide observable action(s) that describes the competency in use. All behavioral anchors should be started with an action verb.

Competencies are broad in nature and should directly relate to all persons in the job class. These competencies are validated by Subject Matter Experts (SME's) during the job class validation process.

Behavioral anchors are not intended to describe every task specifically, but should be written in a way to describe the action as generically as possible so that the description explains the intent of the task without eliminating persons in the job class. For example: “Reads, comprehends, evaluates, and implements federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to environmental issues.” This is broad, yet specific to the overall Environmental Engineering class. A more limiting statement would be, “Reads, comprehends, evaluates, and implements federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to land, air, and water treatment plants.” This statement might exclude people who need to read...pertaining to waste management plants. Having said that they must be generic in nature, the other side of the balance is that they must also be specific enough to relate to the performance of the specific job.

As the process continues, the Human Resource (HR) Department of the agency pulls together a small SME group of eight to ten participants to review, revise, and approve the technical competencies. This process usually takes 2-3 meetings of 2 hours each. During this process the group addresses the competencies, identifies the behavioral anchors, and in a series makes some initial suggestions for leveling of competencies and anchors. If there is a series, it is good to do the entire series as one group, being sure that you constantly remind the group that while competencies may be the same across the levels that behavioral anchors will differ in some cases. In other words, there should be significant differences among the levels through addition or deletion of competencies and behavioral anchors.

When the small group comes to agreement on the competencies and behavioral anchors, the agency assembles a large group of subject matter experts (incumbents in the position and supervisors of the position) to review and rate the competencies and anchors. This group should be from 10 – 25 % of total number in job class. In a small job class agency may chose to use the entire population. The large group selects competencies and anchors based on an “Essential” or “Non-Essential” selection. Previous processes have shown that this yes or no is better than a Likert scale. This large group is also permitted to make comments, deletions, and additions which will later be reviewed by the small group. The forms are tallied, all changes noted, and then are reviewed by the small group, who will address any changes recommended by the larger group. The small group will either concur with the changes or reject them. Some agencies feel that the large group should have a second review of the documents after the small group has made changes. Experience shows that only slight “wordsmith” changes occur. Instead supervisors and the HR Department can conduct a final review and make a determination of what changes should or should not be endorsed and whether the large group needs to be called together again to review. A final review by HR and other senior management insures that the document meets agency requirements and is in line with other related positions.

Once technical competencies are written, they can be used by the agency for training and development purposes, but should not be used for hiring, promotion or evaluation purposes prior to being validated in the job description.

Examples of Technical Competencies and Behavioral Anchors

Political Savvy:

The ability to evaluate characteristics of each situation and use appropriate tactics to achieve results.

BEHAVIORAL ANCHORS

- Knows and understands complex organizations.
- Achieves results when dealing with complex situations.
- Anticipates difficulties and plans approach appropriately.
- Effectively interacts and interfaces with different organizations and individuals appropriately by varying styles as needed.
- Is creative and finds ways to accomplish goals.
- Builds positive relationships.
- Plans strategy, yet remains flexible.
- Articulates organizational mission, goals and objectives in a manner that relates to different audiences.

Problem Solving/Decision Making:

The ability and willingness to work with people and to identify and solve problems in order to effectively and efficiently achieve the goals of the agency.

BEHAVIORAL ANCHORS

- Effectively recognizes and defines problems before seeking solutions.
- Seeks input on problem identification and solution from appropriate sources before moving to a solution.
- Negotiates when necessary to resolve problems.
- Seeks to identify and resolve conflict situations, and effectively deals with issues and people.
- Effectively develops and utilizes teams to solve problems.
- Analyzes the effects of decisions on all stakeholders.
- Exhibits the ability to handle multiple issues and projects concurrently.

Strategic Agility:

The ability to set a vision and direction in an ever changing environment and to plan, manage and adjust in order to meet that vision.

BEHAVIORAL ANCHORS

- Exhibits a strong knowledge and understanding of the agency's mission, values, goals, and objectives both now and for the future.
- Collaborates with the Board and other stakeholders to establish meaningful strategic plans including all budget and performance measures, federal plans and other required plans. Ensures that plans are compatible.
- Seeks ways to increase funding and to effectively utilize resources to meet the current and future goals of the agency.
- Works with the national association to create a strategy for the organization.
- Seeks new funding sources.
- Communicates current trends, future direction, and financial status to the Board.
- Creates an environment where creativity is encouraged in seeking ways to meet current and future needs.

Stakeholder Relations:

The ability and willingness to interact and communicate with stakeholders.

BEHAVIORAL ANCHORS

- Listens to the needs of stakeholders and addresses the issues in a timely and positive manner.
- Proactively provides stakeholders with proper information in an effort to promote the work of the agency and to reduce the occurrence of problems.
- Articulates service programs and needs to the community.
- Develops and maintains a strong working relationship with the media.
- Builds alliances to meet goals through cooperative collaboration.
- Markets the vision and work of the agency to various stakeholders.
- Participates in the development and presentation of a strong public relations program that delivers the message of agency to various stakeholders.
- Represents the agency in local, state, and national activities.

Technical Proficiency:

The ability and willingness to exhibit competency in the technical areas needed to perform the specific job.

BEHAVIORAL ANCHORS

- Reads, comprehends, interprets and implements the federal and state laws, the policies, rules and regulations that govern the agency.
- Demonstrates proficiency in applicable technical areas based on the application of acquired technical knowledge.
- Monitors compliance with policies and laws.
- Plans and implements a personnel system that meets the needs of the agency.
- Provides an environment where staff are challenged, motivated, fairly evaluated and rewarded.
- Recognizes the need for continued professional and technical development.
- Participates in professional activities to enhance knowledge and skills.

About the Author

Amy D. Whitten, J.D., is an attorney, law professor and consultant who lives in Oxford, Mississippi. A former Assistant Attorney General and state manager, Ms. Whitten received the Stennis Award for Excellence in State Government in 1991 and was selected by the Women Lawyers' Association as the Woman Lawyer of the Year in 2000. She serves as a permanent faculty member in both the Certified Public Manager Program and the Basic Supervisory Course and partners as a consultant to a number of state agencies. Ms. Whitten continues her public service as a member of the Board of Institutions of Higher Learning, which oversees Mississippi's 8 public universities and their over 65,000 students.

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