



ACCELERATING GOVERNMENT HIRING:

A Guide for HR Professionals & Hiring Managers

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Merit-Based Hiring

Merit is the foundation of California's civil service system. To serve Californians, we are committed to hiring the best job applicants. Merit-based hiring does not, however, require a system that is overly bureaucratic, time-consuming and complex for hiring managers and job applicants.

This guide is the product of a close partnership among the California Government Operations Agency (GovOps), the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR), and the State Personnel Board (SPB). Together – and informed by the experience of hiring managers across numerous departments – we examined current practices and identified opportunities to streamline the hiring process, while protecting our shared commitment to merit-based hiring.

What is a Fair Hiring Process?

A fair hiring process in California's civil service merit system evaluates all job applicants based on job-related qualifications through a transparent, competitive process, resulting in appointments made solely on merit and fitness for the position. Considerations of political affiliation, race, gender, or other protected categories have no place in California's merit-based hiring process. Hiring should be focused on criteria such as experience, subject matter expertise, relevant skills, demonstrated performance in education or employment, and the ability to work successfully as part of a team.

The test for a fair, merit-based hiring process is not whether someone else would have chosen the exact same candidate from the applicant pool. Instead, the test is whether the process was conducted fairly, transparently, and based on job-related criteria.

While personal relationships should never be the basis for a hiring decision, having personal knowledge of a candidate's work performance does not give the candidate an unfair advantage. For instance, a hiring manager may have a current or prior working relationship with a qualified candidate and know from experience that the candidate is a high performer. All candidates bring their own unique background, and in this example, the candidate's unique background includes the hiring manager's first-hand knowledge of high performance. While this knowledge might be an advantage for the candidate, the advantage is *not unfair*. Conversely, if the hiring manager's current or prior working relationship with the candidate indicates that the candidate is a poor performer, the hiring manager may choose not to interview the candidate since the candidate would not be hired. In this example, the manager's knowledge is a disadvantage for the candidate, but it is not unfair.

How to Use this Guide

In this guide, we outline recommended practices designed to hire the best available candidates, meet state-required merit standards, and efficiently allocate government resources. There is, however, no single required way to conduct a merit-based hire. Departments may choose to use merit-based, fair hiring methods different from those outlined here.

II. SELECTING WHICH APPLICANTS TO INTERVIEW

Screening applications to determine who should be interviewed is an important step in the hiring process. All applications should be screened to maintain fairness and consistency. This process need not be overly burdensome, however. This screening is not an exam, and it does not need to be scored and administered as if it were an exam.¹ Traditional screening methods can take so long that many use Statements of Qualifications (SOQs), page limits, and font requirements to limit the number of applications that must be reviewed. Our goal is to provide a much faster screening process without limiting the applicant pool based on technicalities.

How many applicants are selected for interviews may vary based on the quality of the applicant pool and the preferences of the hiring manager. If the hiring manager chooses not to make an offer to one of the interviewees or the selected applicant refuses an offer, additional applicants from the pool can be selected for interviews. Alternatively, the hiring manager may decide to repost the recruitment to draw a new pool of applicants.

While this guide assumes that hiring interviews are being conducted, departments have the discretion to use other selection tools in place of, or in addition to, interviews. Other possible selection instruments include standardized performance demonstrations, written exercises, role plays or simulations, or any other procedure designed to objectively and fairly evaluate each candidate's ability to be successful in the position. The important consideration is that the process is fair, with all applicants for the position evaluated based on the same job-related selection method. This same screening process may be used whether the next step is an interview or one of these other selection methods.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO APPLICANT SCREENING FOR INTERVIEW

In most instances, this streamlined screening of applicants based on defined criteria is the most effective and efficient method for determining which applicants to interview.

STEP 1: Define and document the key attributes that you are seeking for the role. Some of these may come directly from the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) associated with the job classification.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES (KSAs)

KNOWLEDGE refers to the information and understanding an applicant must possess to perform the job effectively. This can include subject matter expertise, familiarity with specific procedures, or awareness of relevant regulations and policies.

SKILLS are the practical abilities an applicant must demonstrate, such as proficiency in using certain tools, software, or techniques. These are often measurable and can be assessed through various testing methods.

ABILITIES encompass the broader capabilities that enable an applicant to perform job tasks. These might include problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and leadership abilities.

KSAs are outlined in the classification specifications for each job. These specifications help ensure that all applicants are evaluated against consistent criteria, promoting fairness and transparency in the hiring process. For instance, a job classification might specify the need for knowledge of state laws and regulations, skills in data analysis, and the ability to manage a team effectively.

¹ For Career Executive Assignments (CEAs), the application is an exam and must be scored as an exam. Additionally, this screening is separate and distinct from the screening done later in the process by an HR professional to assess minimum qualifications. That is discussed in more detail on page 4.

Other criteria may include evidence of high performance contained in the application. Provided in Figure 1 are some of the possible criteria one might look for in applications. This list is not exhaustive, and hiring managers or other screeners can use any combination of these criteria, KSAs or other job-related criteria to screen applications. Obviously, these should never include any criteria that would discriminate based on race, gender, or any other protected characteristics.

FIGURE 2: APPLICATION SCREENING CRITERIA SAMPLE

Classification: Research Data Analyst II Department Name: Water Resources
• Relevant degrees or certifications • Demonstrated excellence in education and/or career. Recognition within an organization through promotions, awards or additional responsibilities • Experience leading complex research projects • Proficiency in advanced statistical software (e.g., SAS) and Microsoft applications (e.g., Excel, PowerPoint, Power BI) • Experience performing quantitative and qualitative data analysis • Knowledge of water and climate issues • Experience interpreting and applying state and federal laws

The identified criteria can be documented in a simple list (as shown in Figure 2) or in the form of an Ideal Candidate Statement (See sample in Figure 3).

Both formats are intentionally provided to give departments flexibility. Some hiring managers prefer a concise bulleted list that highlights the specific qualifications and experiences they are seeking. Others find that an Ideal Candidate Statement allows them to describe the role's needs in a more narrative, holistic way.

There is no preferred or required format, and departments may choose the approach that best supports clarity for their hiring teams and aligns with their internal practices. The key requirement is that the criteria, regardless of format, are job-related and used consistently when screening applications.

With either of these methods, the hiring manager or HR professional should:

1. Carefully read the job description to understand the key responsibilities and requirements of the role.
2. Identify the KSAs needed for the position. Consider both technical skills (e.g., proficiency in specific software) and soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, leadership).

FIGURE 1: LIST OF SUGGESTED SCREENING CRITERIA

- Relevant job experience and/or education
- Subject matter expertise
- Proficiency in tools and technologies required for the role
- Demonstrated ability to achieve results
- Leadership experience
- Demonstrated excellence in education or career
- Recognition within an organization through promotions, awards or additional responsibilities
- Ability to analyze complex issues and/or handle complicated tasks
- Project management experience
- Ability to express thoughts clearly. Quality and detail of resume
- Excellent customer service
- Dedication to hard work/ability to overcome adversity
- Ability to work successfully as part of a team

FIGURE 3: IDEAL CANDIDATE STATEMENT SAMPLE

Classification: Research Data Analyst II Department Name: Water Resources
The ideal candidate is a highly-skilled professional with a proven track record in leading complex research projects and managing high-level tasks. They will have a record of strong achievement in education and/or their professional career, showing recognition for strong performance through promotions, expanded responsibilities or other awards. Proficiency in advanced statistical software, such as SAS, and Microsoft Office applications, including Excel, PowerPoint, and Power BI, is essential. Strong analytical skills are paramount, encompassing the ability to perform both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Expertise in water and climate issues, coupled with a thorough understanding of research methodologies, is highly desirable. Additionally, experience in interpreting and applying state and federal laws is necessary to ensure compliance and provide informed policy recommendations. The ideal candidate will demonstrate technical proficiency, analytical acumen, and extensive knowledge in their field, thereby contributing significantly to the success of our organization.

3. Think about what information in an application indicates that an applicant possesses these attributes. For example, has the applicant received promotions at work or otherwise demonstrated the ability to achieve results? Has the applicant exhibited educational excellence or the ability to master complex subjects?
4. Create a written list or Ideal Candidate Statement to use and for inclusion in the hiring file.

STEP 2: Read and sort all applications. As each application is read, the reviewer will categorize each applicant into one of three groups: "Interview – Yes," "Interview – Maybe," and "Interview – No." The applications can simply be sorted into one of the three groups based on the reviewer's assessment of how well each application reflects the selection criteria.

STEP 3: Determine who will be interviewed. If the "Interview – Yes" group includes an acceptable number of candidates, then the hiring team need not review the other two groups any further.

If the "Interview – Yes" group includes too many candidates, then the "Interview – Yes" group can be reviewed again, and the strongest candidates can be retained in the "Interview – Yes" category. This process can be repeated until the interview list is a manageable size.

If, after the initial screening, the "Interview – Yes" pool has too few candidates, then the reviewer should look again through the "Interview – Maybe" pool to determine whether any of those candidates should be moved the interview list.

STEP 4: Provide the list of interviewees to your HR office to conduct the minimum qualifications review.

STEP 5: Schedule interviews with applicants on the interview list who meet the minimum qualifications. If there are applicants in the "Interview – Maybe" category remaining, the hiring manager may wish to retain those applications in case no applicant meets expectations during the interview process or in case the interview pool shrinks and additional applicants are sought.

STEP 6: Inform applicants in the "Interview – No" group that they have not been selected for an interview.

III. ASSESSING MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Minimum Qualifications (MQs) are essential requirements that applicants must meet to be hired into a position. These MQs are set forth in the official job classification as approved by the State Personnel Board. MQs may include specific experience, skills, education requirements and, in some cases, licenses or certifications relevant to the job.

HR professionals should generally only assess the MQs of applicants selected for an interview. This targeted approach allows for a faster hiring process, reserving time and resources for applicants who can be legally hired into the position. While screening all applications for MQs is allowed, it is more burdensome and can unnecessarily extend the time to hire. MQs may be screened after interviews when an applicant has been selected, though that may result in spending time interviewing candidates who cannot be hired.

When screening for MQs, HR professionals must go beyond merely matching keywords. Required experience, such as analytical experience, may be met in a broad range of prior roles, and reviews should not hinge on whether the applicant has used certain words. Looking at the broader context of an applicant's experience promotes a more comprehensive assessment and leads to the selection of the best applicants.

IV. CONDUCTING & ASSESSING INTERVIEWS

The interview is an opportunity to assess an applicant's qualifications and potential for success on the job.

The interview is an opportunity to ask job-related questions to assess an applicant's qualifications and potential for success in the role. Interviewing allows a hiring manager to make an assessment in a way that is different from simply reading an application.

There is no fixed number of candidates who must be interviewed to constitute a merit-based hiring decision. The hiring managers should conduct enough interviews to confidently assess the applicants' qualifications and suitability, but not so many that the process becomes unnecessarily long or complex. If none of the individuals interviewed is ultimately hired, additional applicants can be invited to interview, or the hiring manager may decide to re-advertise the recruitment.

The interview panel should consist of at least two members and include the hiring manager and at least one other individual at the same level or higher than the classification for which the recruitment is conducted. The final hiring decision should be made by the supervisor or manager.

This evaluation must be fair and non-discriminatory. The focus should be on the applicant's skills, experience and/or education, and potential to contribute positively to the workplace. It is prohibited to consider an applicant's race, gender, age, or other protected characteristics.

There is no single correct way to evaluate your candidate interviews. We offer the following suggested method outlined below.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO INTERVIEWING

An interview is not an exam and does not require numerical scoring. While numerical scores based solely on interview responses can provide a structured way to compare applicants, they may not capture the nuances of an applicant's responses, the context of their experiences, or their potential to positively benefit a team's culture.

STEP 1: Think about the needs the department is trying to address with the hire and develop open-ended questions that will give interviewers a chance to evaluate how well applicants will meet those needs.

STEP 2: Tailor questions based on context. The standard interview questions are a framework, not a strict script. Each interviewee brings a unique background and set of experiences. It is appropriate to explore different areas in greater depth based on interviewees' unique experiences.

STEP 3: Probe and Clarify. It is important to recognize the difference between the exam process which involves strict adherence to a script and the interview process which allows for more flexibility, probing, and follow-up questions. Hiring managers are encouraged to probe further when needed to understand fully an interviewee's response. For example, if an interviewee's answer is vague, incomplete, or particularly interesting, ask for more detail:

- "Can you tell me more about that?"
- "How did you handle that specific challenge?"
- "What was the result of your action?"

STEP 4: Interviewers may take notes during the interview to remind themselves of key points made or competencies demonstrated in answers. The goal is to support an effective and engaged interview, not to record every word the interviewee says. Some interviewers may find it useful to take notes, but notes are not required in order to prove that a hiring decision was based on merit. Notes should never include references to a candidate's personal characteristics or physical appearance. All notes that are taken should be retained and kept with the hiring package. Interviewers should follow the policies and procedures

of the department conducting the recruitment regarding how interview notes are collected, maintained, and retained, including when serving on a panel for another department.

STEP 5: Evaluate how well an interviewee fits the current needs of the department, which can vary depending on workload needs and staffing composition. For instance, if expertise is needed in an area or function, the hiring panel might look for specific examples of past performance that indicates an interviewee's level of expertise. On the other hand, if the department is fully staffed with experts, the hiring manager might look for someone who can be trained by the more senior personnel to meet longer-term workforce planning goals. In that situation, the hiring panel might look for examples of problem-solving skills, teamwork, and ability to learn, rather than work experience in a specific field. A key goal is also to determine how well an interviewee aligns with the department's mission and culture. This can be assessed through questions about reasons for interest in the position, preferred work environment, and how they handle workplace challenges. Interviewers should always be mindful that fit with the office culture must never be interpreted or used to discriminate against any applicants based on their status or inclusion in a particular group.

STEP 6: Either after each interview or after all interviews are completed, discuss each interviewee's strengths and weaknesses with the other interviewers. Discuss how each interviewee's experiences and responses align with the key criteria and department culture.

STEP 7: Based on the discussion, list the top interviewees in order of preference. This list should reflect the overall impression of each interviewee's suitability for the role. An optional Tiered Ranking Form is included in the Appendix to help departments evaluate how well interviewees align with the screening criteria.

STEP 8: The final decision should be made by the hiring manager, taking into consideration the panel's input and the overall fit of each interviewee with the department's needs. The interview is intended to provide the hiring manager and panel with valuable information, but the selected applicant does not have to be the individual who did best in the interview. If other factors outweigh a lackluster interview, include that discussion in the hiring justification discussed in Section VI below.

STEP 9: Proceed to reference checks.

FIGURE 4: COMMON INTERVIEW BIASES AND HOW TO MITIGATE THEM

Confirmation Bias

Interviewers may seek information that confirms an early impression of an applicant.

Mitigation: Re-anchor to job-related criteria before each interview; use the standard interview questions as a framework; focus on specific examples rather than general impressions.

Similarity Bias

Interviewers may favor applicants who share similar backgrounds, communication styles, or interests.

Mitigation: Focus evaluations on departmental needs; use panel discussions to balance perspectives; ensure "fit" is not interpreted in a way that excludes applicants based on protected characteristics.

Halo / Horn Effect

A single strong positive (halo) or negative (horn) attribute may overshadow the rest of the interview.

Mitigation: Evaluate applicants across multiple job-related factors; use panel discussions to ensure a balanced assessment.

First-Impression Bias

Early impressions, often influenced by nerves, may disproportionately shape the evaluation.

Mitigation: Allow applicants time to settle; focus on the substance of responses.

Communication-Style Bias

Applicants communicate differently based on personality, background, or experience.

Mitigation: Focus on content rather than style; use probing questions to clarify substance; consider whether the role actually requires a particular communication approach.

Over-Reliance on Personal Knowledge

First-hand knowledge of an applicant's work is valuable but must be tied to job-related performance.

Mitigation: Ensure personal knowledge relates directly to job duties; document how it informs the hiring decision.

Stereotyping or Protected-Category Bias

Any consideration of protected characteristics is prohibited and inconsistent with merit-based hiring.

Mitigation: Redirect if protected information arises; keep notes strictly job-related; re-anchor decisions to the established screening criteria.

V. CONDUCTING REFERENCE CHECKS

Past on-the-job performance is arguably the most important indicator of future success. Once an applicant has been selected, or if the field has been narrowed and the hiring manager is having trouble deciding between applicants, reference checks may be done to get a better understanding of past job performance.

For applicants with state service, you may also choose to check the applicant's official personnel file (OPF) at this point. When doing so, refer to your department's OPF policies and procedures, as well as any applicable regulations, to ensure the review is conducted appropriately and in a manner consistent with departmental requirements.

When considering applicants with whom one has worked or is currently working, this direct experience with an applicant's skills and abilities should be given great weight. First-hand knowledge of an applicant's work can outweigh interview performance or written application materials. Knowing that someone is an excellent employee based on personal observations over an extended period is perhaps the strongest indication of merit. Conversely, if you know that an applicant's work has been mediocre or poor, that is essential information regardless of interview performance or written submissions.

FIGURE 5: USING PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE APPROPRIATELY IN MERIT-BASED HIRING

What Personal Knowledge Includes

Job-related information gained through direct experience working with the applicant, such as:

- Quality and accuracy of work products
- Reliability, professionalism, and ability to meet deadlines
- Problem solving skills and ability to work independently
- Collaboration, communication, and effectiveness as part of a team
- Demonstrated performance over time in relevant duties

What Personal Knowledge Does Not Include

Information unrelated to job performance, such as:

- Social familiarity or non-work interactions
- Personal relationships or preferences
- Assumptions based on personality, background, or protected characteristics

How to Use Personal Knowledge Fairly

- Consider personal knowledge as one job-related factor among others, such as the application, interview, and reference checks
- Ensure the information reflects actual work performance and aligns with the needs of the position

Documenting Personal Knowledge

If personal knowledge informs the hiring decision, briefly note in the hiring justification:

- The nature of the prior working relationship (see Figure 8 for an illustration of how this can be documented)
- The job-related performance observed
- How that performance supports the applicant's ability to succeed in the role

Particularly when considering an applicant whose work a hiring manager does not know well, employment references can provide valuable information about an applicant's past performance and are highly recommended when available. Reference checks are not required, however, and some individuals may have no prior work experience.

Hiring managers are not limited to speaking with references provided by an applicant. Caution should be exercised when contacting others, as the applicant may not want a current employer to know that they are pursuing other job opportunities.

It is generally best for the hiring manager to speak with references, as written evaluations can be difficult to interpret. Verbal reference checks help ensure that the hiring decision is well-informed and based on a comprehensive understanding of the applicant's potential to succeed in the new role. Clearly, a strong recommendation is very valuable information. On the other hand, some references may be reluctant to share much positive or negative information about an applicant's past performance and hiring managers may take into account a reference's unwillingness to provide positive comments. However, keep in mind that many private-sector employers have strict policies against providing information beyond dates of employment and

job duties. In such cases, a reference's unwillingness to provide substantive performance information should not be used against a candidate.

The reference check does not have to be limited to certain pre-approved questions, nor does it require incredibly detailed notes. If reference checks play a role in the hiring decision, that should be noted in the hiring justification discussed in the next section.

Please see below for sample reference check questions.

SAMPLE REFERENCE CHECK QUESTIONS

Choose from among these possible questions or craft your own. Questions and answers should relate only to work-related factors. Redirect the reference provider if any inappropriate personal or protected information is offered.

Sample Reference Questions

- How long have you (did you) supervise the candidate? (Verify dates of employment/supervision.)
- What is/was the nature of the candidate's job when the candidate worked for you?
- Does the candidate possess relevant specialized knowledge and or skills? If so, please discuss.
- What is the candidate's ability to independently research problems? Can you provide an example of when the candidate illustrated an ability to research and apply problem solving?
- Is there any training that should be offered to the candidate to improve a particular skill or quality? If so, what would it be?
- What is the candidate's ability to work under pressure? Can you provide an example of when the candidate demonstrated an ability to work under pressure?
- What is the candidate's ability to accept change? Can you provide an example of when the candidate illustrated an ability to adapt to change?
- Does/did the candidate require an unusual degree of supervision? Can you provide an example of when the candidate successfully worked independently?
- Is/was the candidate willing to accept supervision and constructive criticism? How does the candidate interact with managers or supervisors?
- Rate the quality of the candidate's work in comparison to others in the unit.
- What would you say are the candidate's strengths?
- What skills would you suggest could be worked on to improve overall performance?
- Describe an example(s) of the candidate's working relationship with peers.
- Do you have any reservations about recommending the candidate for this job? If yes, please explain.
- Would you rehire the candidate if you had the opportunity? If not, please explain.

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being outstanding, how would you rate the candidate's performance in the following areas:

- | | |
|--|---|
| A. Level of detail and accuracy in work | G. Ability to meet deadlines |
| B. Organization of work | H. Ability to prioritize |
| C. Ability to follow instructions | I. Dependability |
| D. Ability to communicate clearly | J. Punctuality |
| E. Degree of supervision needed | K. Follows attendance reporting procedures |
| F. Willingness to take on responsibility | L. Ability to accept constructive criticism |

VI. FINAL APPLICANT SELECTION & JUSTIFICATION

At this point in the process, the hiring manager may be ready to extend an offer of employment. The chosen applicant does not necessarily have to be the highest-rated interviewee. The selection should be evaluated based on the totality of the information about the applicants under consideration, including, but not limited to:

- Whether an applicant possesses unique skills or experiences that are particularly valuable for the role or future projects
- Consideration of how well the applicant will contribute to a positive work environment
- The applicant's potential for development and growth within the organization
- The applicant's written submission and interview
- Reference checks or first-hand knowledge of an applicant's work

FIGURE 6: DEFINING AND DOCUMENTING “BEST FIT” IN MERIT-BASED HIRING

What “Best Fit” Means

“Best fit” refers to how well an applicant's job-related qualifications, behaviors, and demonstrated competencies align with the current needs of the role, the team, and the organization. “Best fit” should be considered at the point and time of the recruitment, recognizing the needs of the hiring authority may vary based on workload, team composition, and operational priorities. It includes the applicant's ability to contribute positively to the work environment through professionalism, communication, collaboration, and sound judgment.

Job-Related Factors That Define Fit

Hiring managers may consider how well an applicant demonstrates:

- Alignment between the applicant's experience and the position's core duties
- Demonstrated ability to meet current workload demands or specialized needs
- Professional behaviors that support a healthy work environment (e.g., respectful communication, accountability, reliability, emotional maturity)
- Ability to collaborate effectively with colleagues, customers, and stakeholders
- Constructive responses to conflict, pressure, or ambiguity
- Demonstrated collaboration and professionalism that supports healthy team interactions and effective working relationships
- Potential for growth in areas important to the team's long-term goals
- Strength of interview responses and examples of past performance
- Relevant reference information or first-hand knowledge of job-related behaviors and performance

How to Document “Best Fit”

A hiring justification should briefly describe:

- The specific needs of the position or team (e.g., analytical depth, customer engagement, project management, collaboration)
- How the selected applicant's qualifications, professional behaviors, or competencies best meet those needs at this point in time
- Examples from the interview or application that demonstrate communication, teamwork, adaptability, or professionalism
- Job-related reference information or first-hand observations (if applicable)
- Any unique strengths – technical or interpersonal – that align with the team's operational context

What “Best Fit” Is Not

Favoring someone due to personal affinity or shared interests rather than job-related merit. Assumptions based on personality or background. Consideration of any protected characteristic.

FIGURE 7: CONSIDERING “BEST FIT” AT THE POINT IN TIME OF THE RECRUITMENT

“Best Fit” at a Point in Time

“Best fit” should be evaluated in the context of the *specific needs of the position and team at the point in time of the recruitment*. Hiring needs change based on workload, staffing composition, and emerging operational priorities. As long as these considerations remain job-related and applied fairly, hiring authorities may take them into account when determining which applicant is the best fit for a particular recruitment.

Example:

If a unit is currently staffed with highly-experienced employees who are expected to retire or leave around the same period, the “best fit” for the role at this time may be an applicant with less experience but strong growth potential. Selecting someone who can be trained by existing personnel supports continuity of operations and aligns with long-term succession planning needs. This approach remains consistent with merit principles when grounded in job-related factors and documented appropriately.

DOCUMENTING THE REASON FOR SELECTION

The hiring manager should draft a brief memorandum to file explaining why the applicant was selected. This is not a writing exercise, and the memorandum does not need to be long or time consuming. Rather, this is a thinking exercise about why one applicant is the better choice than others and serves as a contemporaneous record of the hiring rationale. See the sample hiring justification at Figure 8.

FIGURE 8: HIRING JUSTIFICATION SAMPLE

Job Control: 443098
Classification: Research Data Analyst II
Department Name: Water Resources

Hiring Manager Name: Ruth Anderson

Justification Summary:

Lucia Rodriguez has been selected as Research Data Analyst II after a competitive process. Her job-related qualifications, interview performance, and alignment with the role’s requirements were key factors. Lucia stood out above the other applicants. Lucia’s experience as a policy fellow with the Delta Stewardship Council (2021-2023) and as a Research Data Analyst I with the Department of Water Resources (2023-present) are directly relevant to the environmental analysis required for this position. Her experience, interview, and reference checks all indicate that she is highly skilled in data management and knows how to use advanced statistical software. Her interview responses showed a strong understanding of the role and organizational values. Additionally, I think her experience and positive attitude will enrich our team dynamics. She received positive reviews from previous supervisors, and I have first-hand knowledge of her strong work ethic and knowledge of our subject matter.

CHECKLIST

- ☒ Create a written list of applicant screening criteria or an Ideal Candidate Statement
- ☒ Review all applications and sort into three groups:
(1) Interview – Yes, (2) Interview – Maybe, (3) Interview – No
- ☒ Assess MQs for individuals selected for interviews
- ☒ Conduct interviews
- ☒ Hiring panel discusses the merits of the interviewed applicants
- ☒ Hiring manager decides on which, if any, of the applicants to hire
- ☒ Check references, including OPF review if applicable
- ☒ Draft a brief hiring justification memorandum

Tiered Ranking Form

Classification & Working Title:

Department Filling Vacancy:

Instructions

After each interview, rank interviewees from most competitive to least competitive in descending order. The ranking is not an interviewee-to-interviewee comparison; rather, it reflects how well each interviewee aligns with the established screening criteria or Ideal Candidate Statement. You may not give any two interviewees the same rank.

Additional ranking is on the back of this sheet. Should you interview more than 15 candidates, please continue the tiered ranking system on a separate sheet of paper.

Interview								
Interviewee Rank	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight
	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
		2	2	2	2	2	2	2
			3	3	3	3	3	3
				4	4	4	4	4
					5	5	5	5
						6	6	6
							7	7
								8

The State of California is an Equal Opportunity employer committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of age, ancestry, color, physical or mental disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, marital status, medical condition, military and veteran status, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, or sexual orientation consistent with applicable federal and state laws. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for applicants with disabilities who self-disclose.

Tiered Ranking Form

Interview							
Interviewee Rank	Nine	Ten	Eleven	Twelve	Thirteen	Fourteen	Fifteen
	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
		10	10	10	10	10	10
			11	11	11	11	11
				12	12	12	12
					13	13	13
						14	14
						15	

PANEL ACKNOWLEDGMENT		
I confirm that the interview was conducted fairly and that my evaluations reflect an honest assessment of the candidate's job-related qualifications.		
_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Date