

Tips for Open Forum Interviews

Human Resources
2021

Purpose of Open Forum Interviews

- **Purpose**

- Allows the Bristol community to participate and provide feedback on the interview process.
- Promotes an objective and broad-based interview process.
- Variety of participants provides a mix of disciplinary expertise and institutional insight.
- Welcomes the candidate to Bristol through your active participation, questions asked, and overall inviting atmosphere.



Virtual Open Forums – Best Practices

- **Be prepared – treat video interviews with the same seriousness as in-person interviews.**
 - Keep your microphone on mute when not speaking, but consider leaving your camera on so the candidate can see who they are meeting with.
 - Avoid instant messaging and checking your phone or e-mail during the virtual interview. Turn off any and all programs/notifications on your computer, if possible, to limit distraction and noise.
- **Lead the interview with empathy, kindness and courtesy.**
 - Appoint a lead for the open forum, who will make sure attendees are aware of how the interview will flow.
 - Interviewers and candidates alike should be empathetic and not fret if a child or pet jumps into the video frame of an interview. We're working in rare circumstances and should all acknowledge that at times our circumstances can be unpredictable.
 - Interviewers should limit notetaking to the interview content itself rather than the candidate's virtual location/surroundings.

Interviewing Candidates

- **Permitted Interview Question Topics:**

- Duties and responsibilities
- Qualifications, abilities, experience, education
- Bristol's mission, vision, and core values
- Diversity, equity and inclusion programs
- Job location, travel requirements, equipment, and facilities available

- **Best Practices:**

- Review candidates' resumes and job description prior to open forum.
- Ask open-ended & behavioral-based questions.



Interview Questions – Best Practices

- **Less Effective Questions (Closed Ended):**
 - “Are you a creative problem solver?”
 - “Are you a good manager?”
 - Candidate’s Answer: **“Yes.”** – They have answered the question fully.
- **Better Questions (Open Ended, Behavioral Based):**
 - “Describe a time when you had to come up with a creative solution to a problem.”
 - “How would your employees describe your management style? Give an example of a time you had to provide difficult feedback to an employee and the approach you used.”
 - Candidate is able to elaborate on their experiences to demonstrate their behaviors in the work environment. This allows interviewers to better assess the candidate’s skills and qualifications for the position.

Improper Interview Questions

The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) does not permit asking interview questions pertaining to:

Age

National Origin

Race/Color

Genetic Information

Veteran Status

Handicap/Disability

Pregnancy

Religion

Sex/Gender

Criminal Record

Sexual Orientation

Political Affiliation

Marital/Family Status



Can you ask this question in an interview?

Do you live nearby? How far is your commute?

NO – This could be viewed discrimination based on location. We cannot make hiring decisions based upon where someone lives.



You also cannot ask:
Where did you grow up?
How long have you lived here?

Can you ask this question in an interview?

What year did you graduate high school / college?



NO – This could be viewed as age discrimination.

The educational requirements would be addressed during the application process; date of graduation is not relevant.

Can you ask this question in an interview?

We've always had a [man/woman] do this job. How do you think you will stack up?



NO – This could be viewed as gender discrimination.

An appropriate question would be:

What skills/experience would you bring to our institution?

Can you ask this question in an interview?

The interviewer recognizes the applicant
and asks,

“Do you go to [church/synagogue name]?
I think I’ve seen you there before.”

NO - This could be viewed as
religious discrimination.



Do not engage in these types of
conversations during the interview
process.

Can you ask this question in an interview?

**You mentioned that you have children.
How will you manage the demands of this
job with your home responsibilities?**



NO – This could be viewed as
gender discrimination.

**Do not engage in these types of
conversations during the interview
process.**

After the Open Forum

- Consider all topics covered during interview.
- Complete evaluation form and submit all evaluation materials to Hiring Manager by deadline.
 - Remember that all search documentation is discoverable.
- Hiring Manager will use feedback from the entire interview process, including the open forum, to arrive at a final decision.



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