# National Institutes of Health

# Leadership & Management

# Behavioral Interview Guide

## Behavioral-Based Interview Overview

Behavioral-based interviews focus on discovering how a candidate performed in specific work-related situations. This interview technique seeks to uncover how a potential employee actually did behave in a given situation; not on how he or she might behave in the future. The premise behind this technique is that a good predictor of future performance is how someone performed in the past in a similar situation. Behavioral-based interviews are becoming more common throughout industry and government and many candidates are familiar with this technique and are well prepared for these interviews. Candidates can and should draw on previous work-related experiences as well as non-work-related experiences (e.g., school projects, community involvement) that are relevant to the interview questions.

### Behavioral Interviewing Suggested Protocol

As much as possible, all questions should relate to experiences that have occurred in the last 2-3 years (best for recollection of behavioral details).

All behavioral interview questions should focus on what the interviewee did, said, felt or thought in the past. The interviewer should be looking for phrases such as “I did….”, “I said….” etc.

Do not ask questions about what the interviewee would do in a given situation or what they would have done differently. The focus is on what the interviewee actually did/said/thought/felt in the past. If the interviewee uses such phrases as “I would,” the interviewer should probe by saying, “What did you actually do at that time?”

The interviewee should focus on what he/she did, rather than what “we” did. While working as part of a team is very common and desirable, it is important to understand what the candidate’s individual role was. The interviewer should probe the interviewee if “We” is used in describing actions. For example, if the interviewee says “We implemented the new payroll system by…..”, it is the interviewer’s job to ask the interviewee what his/her role was and what he actually did (as an individual).

Prior to delving into the detail of each question, ask the interviewee to provide a brief (30 second) overview of the situation by highlighting the beginning, middle, and end. This helps the interviewer to keep the interview on track. For example, if you feel lost in the discussion, you can pause the conversation by asking the interviewee where you are in the story (beginning, middle, or end).

### Suggested Introduction to the Interview

This is a behavioral interview, which may be different from interviews you have had in the past. A behavioral interview focuses on what you have done, said, felt and thought in past experiences. Please use the first person as much as possible because I am most interested in what you have done, said, thought and felt in the situations. So, if you use the term “we” rather than “I”, I may interrupt you to clarify what you did in the situation versus what others did.

I am going to ask you specific questions about your experiences and will ask that you try, as best as you can, to only discuss experiences that have occurred within the past 2 or 3 years so that you will be able to recall the details of the situations.

I will ask follow-up questions to get as many of the details around what you were doing in the situation. Imagine that I am making a movie of what you were doing in the given situation. I am interested in everything you did, said, thought and felt.

NOTE: The information provided above offers suggestions for conducting behavioral-based interviews. Interviewers should use this information as a tool and tailor the interview to meet the needs of the individual organization.

|  |
| --- |
| **Leadership & Management** |
| Competency | Definition |
| **Change Leadership** | Takes responsibility for leading, directing, and managing organizational change. |
| **Establishing Focus** | Aligns personnel and other resources in a manner consistent with organizational vision and objectives. |
| **Knowledge Management** | Establishes and provides on-going support of knowledge management processes and tools in order to ensure continued organizational viability and progress toward vision. |
| **Navigating the Public Sector** | Understands the workings of the Federal Government and how to achieve results in this environment. |
| **Vision** | Builds and shares a compelling view of the direction, or sense of purpose of the organization, to engage and motivate others toward a common goal. |
| **Coaching** | Guides others to make the most of their available skills. |
| **Conflict Resolution** | Uses a variety of approaches to manage and resolve concerns, disagreement, and conflict. |
| **Continuous Development** | Builds professional skills and competencies of self and others. |
| **Delegation** | Delegates responsibility and authority as appropriate. |
| **Leveraging Diversity** | Leads and manages an inclusive workplace that maximizes the talents of each person to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. |
| **Mentoring** | Helps others, regardless of reporting relationship, to acquire the awareness, confidence, and resources necessary to fulfill their potential. |
| **Motivating Others** | Inspires others. Commitment to their work and organizational excellence. |
| **Performance Management** | Develops and implements strategies that optimize individual performance within the organization. |
| **Decision Quality** | Makes sound decisions that take into account objectives, risks, implications, and agency and governmental regulations. |
| **Financial Acumen** | Maintains and applies a broad understanding of financial management principles to ensure decisions are fiscally sound and responsible. |
| **Risk Management** | Plans and implements measures that will avoid, overcome or compensate for elements of risk. |

**Change Leadership**

Takes responsibility for leading, directing, and managing organizational change.

### Key Behaviors:

* Understands and supports the need for change.
* Accurately assesses the potential barriers and resources necessary for change initiatives.
* Envisions and articulates the intended result of the change process.
* Develops a change strategy that includes milestones and timelines.
* Provides direction and focus during the change process.
* Acts as a catalyst for organizational change.
* Helps to generate support of the changes throughout the organization (e.g., within office, division, and/or IC).
* Identifies and enlists allies who support the change process.
* Provides resources, removes barriers, and acts as an advocate for those initiating change.

### Interview questions:

1. Describe a situation in which you had to implement new policies, standards or procedures in your organization. What was your approach? What was the outcome? How long did the process take? How did you assure that employees were kept aware of new or changing policies, regulations or processes?
2. Tell us about a time when you anticipated the future and made changes to current responsibilities/operations to meet future needs.
3. Give an example of a time when you helped a staff member accept change and make the necessary adjustments to move forward. What were the change/transition skills that you used?
4. Discuss a controversial policy or position statement you developed. How did you develop it? What did you consider when recommending what the organization’s position should be? How was it received?
5. Provide examples of policies or procedures you have analyzed and implemented for an organization. How are they best documented to provide an organization with well-defined direction?
6. Tell me about a policy document or manual you developed. What was your approach?
7. Provide an example of a time when you had to gather and interpret data from various sources in order to identify trends. What challenges did you face? How were these challenges overcome?
8. Discuss any benchmarking (i.e., evaluating processes against best practices) or best practices (i.e., most efficient and effective way of accomplishing a goal) projects in which you have been involved. What steps do you take to complete this type of project? What was your approach?
9. Describe a major change that occurred in a job that you held. How did you adapt to this change?
10. Tell us about a situation in which you had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
11. Tell us about a time that you had to adapt to a difficult situation.
12. Tell us about a suggestion you made to improve the way job processes/operations worked. What was the result?
13. Tell us about a time when you used your leadership ability to gain support for what initially had strong opposition.
14. Tell us about a time when you used your leadership ability to gain support for what initially had strong opposition.

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

## Establishing Focus

Aligns personnel and other resources in a manner consistent with organizational vision and objectives.

### Key Behaviors:

* Creates personal job goals and organizational goals based on organizational vision.
* Takes responsibility for developing, communicating, and gaining commitment to broad organizational goals.
* Helps others understand how their work relates to the organizational vision and ensures that job goals are fully aligned with organizational goals.
* Identifies goals that are not aligned with the organizational vision and takes steps to shift the focus.
* Identifies and acquires necessary personnel, resources and information.
* Ensures that resources, time, and attention are allocated in proportion to organization priorities.

### Interview questions:

1. In the past how have you created awareness of programs and initiatives across the organization? What challenges did you face? How did you handle them?
2. Describe a situation when you had to exercise a significant amount of self-control.
3. What tools or methods have you utilized to disseminate information effectively to an organization? How did you select the most appropriate one to use?
4. Give an example of a situation where others were intense, but you were able to maintain your composure.
5. Which of your jobs had the most rapid change? How did you feel about it?
6. What kind of events cause you stress on the job?
7. What was the most stressful situation you have faced? How did you deal with it?
8. How did you react when faced with constant time pressure? Give an example.
9. It is important to maintain a positive attitude at work when you have other things on your mind. Give a specific example of when you were able to do that.
10. Tell us about some demanding situations in which you managed to remain calm and composed.
11. There are times when we are placed under extreme pressure on the job. Tell about a time when you were under such pressure and how you handled it.
12. Tell us about a time when a job had to be completed and you were able to focus your attention and efforts to get it done.

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

## Knowledge Management

Establishes and provides on-going support of knowledge management processes and tools in order to ensure continued organizational viability and progress toward vision.

### Key Behaviors:

* Identifies and deploys the necessary resources to effectively capture and distribute knowledge.
* Provides on-going support of processes and systems that identify, capture, distribute and reuse knowledge.
* Cultivates a learning organization by encouraging and rewarding knowledge sharing and reuse.
* Stays abreast of leading practices and tools in knowledge management.
* Models desired knowledge sharing behaviors.

### Interview questions:

1. How do you stay abreast of issues that impact the organization? What resources do you use?
2. What tools or methods have you utilized to disseminate information effectively to an organization? How did you select the most appropriate one to use?
3. In the past how have you created awareness of programs and initiatives across the organization? What challenges did you face? How did you handle them?
4. How do you keep your superiors informed about what is being done in your work area?
5. How do you keep subordinates informed about information that affects their jobs?
6. Tell us how you keep your job knowledge current with the ongoing changes in the industry.

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Navigating the Public Sector**

Understands the workings of the Federal Government and how to achieve results in this environment.

### Key Behaviors:

* Identifies and keeps up to date on key national and international policies and economic, political, and social trends that affect the organization.
* Maintains thorough knowledge of governmental activities and key personnel.
* Understands the legislative process and how it impacts the Department, the Agency and one’s own organization and role.
* Uses governmental systems, processes and/or programs appropriately to accomplish organizational goals.
* Develops and maintains relationships with governmental personnel and leverages these relationships as needed to accomplish one’s role in public service.

### Interview questions:

1. Provide an example of a time when you had to research information regarding government rules. What sources of information did you use?
2. Describe a time when you had to inform, advise, and educate others regarding federal government policies and procedures? What was your approach?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Vision**

Builds and shares a compelling view of the direction, or sense of purpose of the organization, to engage and motivate others toward a common goal.

### Key Behaviors:

* Takes a long-term view of the organization and its surrounding environment.
* Anticipates factors or future trends shaping the organization to craft the vision.
* Articulates a sense of purpose for the organization.
* Conveys a shared, concrete vision of the desired state which provides the basis for formulating organizational strategies and goals.
* Demonstrates an optimism and sense of urgency that inspires others to embrace the vision.
* Influences/motivates others to translate the vision into action.

### Interview questions:

1. Describe how the position you are applying for contributes to the unit/NIH’s goals. What are the unit’s goals/mission?
2. Describe what steps/methods you have used to define/identify a vision for your unit/position.
3. How do you see your job relating to the overall goals of the organization?
4. Did you have a strategic plan? How was it developed? How did you communicate it to the rest of your staff?
5. What were your long-range plans at your most recent employer? What was our role in developing them?
6. What were your annual goals at your most current employer? How did you develop these goals? Which ones have you reached? How did you reach them? Which have you missed? Why did you miss them?
7. What company plans have you developed? Which ones have you reached? How did you reach them? Which have you missed? Why did you miss them?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |
|  |

**Coaching**

Guides others to make the most of their available skills.

### Key Behaviors:

* Recognizes and encourages performance excellence.
* Recognizes and analyzes a performance problem.
* Identifies effective strategies for modifying behaviors and attitudes.
* Plans and initiates a coaching session.
* Identifies various ideas to assist the learner.
* Identifies and demonstrates supportive coaching behavior.
* Uses the various questioning techniques.
* Employs and encourages a feedback process.

### Interview questions:

1. Discuss a situation in which you had to provide guidance to an employee on performance issues related to a specific project. What was your approach? What difficulties did you face? What solutions did you implement?
2. How do you coach an employee in completing a new assignment?
3. There are times when people need extra help. Give an example of when you were able to provide that support to a person with whom you worked.
4. How do you coach a subordinate to develop a new skill?
5. How do you handle performance reviews? Tell me about a difficult one.
6. How do you evaluate the productivity/effectiveness of your subordinates?
7. How do you get data for performance reviews?
8. How do you keep track of what your subordinates are doing?
9. Have you ever had a subordinate whose performance was consistently marginal? What did you do?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Conflict Resolution**

Uses a variety of approaches to manage and resolve concerns, disagreement, and conflict.

### Key Behaviors:

* Invites others to express their points of view.
* Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations.
* Expresses disagreements in a way that does not attack or disparage others.
* Helps uncover underlying and unstated issues causing the conflict.
* Brings disagreements into the open and addresses them.
* Expands areas of agreement and narrows areas of disagreement.
* Facilitates the development of creative solutions to conflict.
* Identifies the truth in criticisms.
* Knows when to compromise and when to stand firm.

### Interview questions:

1. Discuss a situation in which you had to provide guidance to an employee on performance issues related to a specific project. What was your approach? What difficulties did you face? What solutions did you implement?
2. Have you ever had to settle conflict between two people on the job? What was the situation and what did you do?
3. Tell us about a time when you had to help two peers settle a dispute. How did you go about identifying the issues? What did you do? What was the result?
4. How do you typically deal with conflict? Can you give me an example?
5. Sometimes we need to remain calm on the outside when we are really upset on the inside. Give an example of a time that this happened to you.
6. Tell us about a situation in which you had to separate the person from the issue when working to resolve issues.
7. Sometimes the only way to resolve a defense or conflict is through negotiation and compromise. Tell about a time when you were able to resolve a difficult situation by finding some common ground.
8. Have you ever met resistance when implementing a new idea or policy to a work group? How did you deal with it? What happened?
9. In this role, you will have to advise senior leadership on how to handle crises and controversial issues. Discuss a time when you had to counsel a manager through a tough issue that involved communicating with an external group.
10. Discuss a communication event that did not go well for someone you helped prepare for the event. Why did it not go well? What did you learn from this incident? What would you do differently?
11. Discuss a controversial policy or position statement you developed. How did you develop it? What did you consider when recommending what the organization’s position should be? How was it received?
12. Give a specific example of a time when you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome? How would you asses your role in diffusing the situation?
13. Describe a time when you took personal accountability for a conflict and initiated contact with the individual(s) involved to explain your actions.
14. Have you ever been a member of a group where two of the members did not work well together? What did you do to get them to do so?
15. Give an example of when you “went to the source” to address a conflict. Do you feel trust levels were improved as a result?
16. Problems occur in almost all work relationships. Describe a time when you had to cope with the resentment or hostility of a subordinate or co-worker.
17. What are some of the problems you have faced; such as between business development and project leaders, between one department and another, between you and your peers? How did you recognize that they were there?
18. Describe a time when you facilitated a creative solution to a problem between two employees.
19. Tell us about a time when you and your current/previous supervisor disagreed but you still found a way to get your point across.

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Continuous Development**

Builds professional skills and competencies of self and others.

### Key Behaviors:

* Identifies personal skill areas to be developed and translates them into measurable goals.
* Seeks out ways to improve performance and efficiency on the job.
* Seeks out opportunities and encourages others to learn from mistakes.
* Works toward performance improvement of self and others by identifying and acting upon factors that influence an individual’s performance potential.
* Invests time and resources to learn, grow, and develop.
* Consistently seeks out opportunities that will create growth and development.
* Understands and identifies a developmental need and seeks out or establishes applicable activities or materials.

### Interview questions:

1. What sorts of things have you done to become better qualified for your career?
2. Tell us about a recent job or experience that you would describe as a real learning experience? What did you learn from the job or experience?
3. What have you done to further your own professional development in the past 5 years.
4. When you have been made aware of, or have discovered for yourself, a problem in your work performance, what was your course of action? Can you give an example?
5. If there were one area you’ve always wanted to improve upon, what would that be?
6. In what ways are you trying to improve yourself?
7. What goal have you set for yourself that you have successfully achieved?
8. What was the most useful criticism you ever received?
9. Tell us about a recent job or experience that you would describe as a real learning experience? What did you learn from the job or experience?
10. Tell us me about an important goal that you set in the past. Were you successful? Why?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Delegation**

Delegates responsibility and authority as appropriate.

### Key Behaviors:

* Divides overall work into components and determines what can be delegated.
* Delegates responsibilities and ensures that group tasks are completed.
* Clearly defines and communicates objectives and tasks.
* Communicates context, purpose, and long-term benefits to empower others to take greater responsibility.
* Communicates expectations regarding outcomes or deliverables, timelines, and quality of work.
* Delegates responsibility and authority to others based on their ability and potential.
* Expresses appreciation to others for taking on tasks.
* Gives others freedom to have control of assigned tasks and duties.
* Provides others with opportunities that challenge them and develop their capabilities.

### Interview questions:

1. Do you consider yourself a macro or micro manager? How do you delegate?
2. When all have been over-loaded, how do your people meet job assignments?
3. How do you make the decision to delegate work?
4. Tell us how you go about delegating work?
5. How did you keep track of delegated assignments?
6. What was the biggest mistake you have had when delegating work? The biggest success?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Leveraging Diversity**

Leads and manages an inclusive workplace that maximizes the talents of each person to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

### Key Behaviors:

* Treats all individuals with respect regardless of individual differences (e.g., race, gender, age, ethnicity, physical capabilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, religion).
* Develops a knowledge and understanding of different cultures and backgrounds.
* Builds collaborative and mutually beneficial working relationships with people regardless of their individual differences.
* Modifies communication and behavior based on an understanding of individual differences.
* Utilizes an understanding of individual differences to communicate with, influence, and manage individuals (e.g., resolving conflict, building teams) throughout the organization.
* Recognizes and communicates the value of diverse perspectives.
* Fosters an environment of inclusion, where diverse thoughts are freely shared, respected and integrated.
* Helps others increase their awareness and acceptance of individual differences.
* Develops policies, procedures and values that encourage awareness and acceptance of diversity.
* Recruits, develops, and retains a diverse, high quality workforce in an equitable manner.

### Interview questions:

1. Please describe your experiences managing diversity in the workplace. In your previous positions, were you required to develop and implement diversity education and training? Explain how these programs were delivered to the organization?
2. Give a specific example of how you have helped create an environment where differences are valued, encouraged and supported.
3. Tell us about a time when you made an intentional effort to get to know someone from another culture.
4. What have you done to further your knowledge/understanding about diversity? How have you demonstrated your learning?
5. What have you done to support diversity in your unit?
6. What measures have you taken to make someone feel comfortable in an environment that was obviously uncomfortable with his or her presence?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Mentoring**

Helps others, regardless of reporting relationship, to acquire the awareness, confidence, and resources necessary to fulfill their potential.

### Key Behaviors:

* Acts as a role model and example to others.
* Maintains a genuine interest in facilitating the personal and professional growth of others, regardless of reporting relationship.
* Provides informal developmental feedback.
* Listens actively to what is said and not said, and to support others' self-expression.
* Shares expertise and provides informal advice.
* Assists protege in navigating organizational landscape to achieve objectives.
* Assists, supports, and encourages others in identifying difficulties, prioritizing tasks, defining goals (e.g., creating an IDP), and producing positive results.

### Interview questions:

1. When do you give positive feedback to people? Tell me about the last time you did. Give an example of how you handle the need for constructive criticism with a subordinate or peer.
2. What have you done to develop your subordinates? Give an example
3. How do you coach an employee in completing a new assignment?
4. There are times when people need extra help. Give an example of when you were able to provide that support to a person with whom you worked.

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Motivating Others**

Inspires others. Commitment to their work and organizational excellence.

### Key Behaviors:

* Helps others see the personal benefits of doing their job well.
* Encourages others to do their best.
* Looks for and uses new, creative ways to motivate others.
* Acknowledges achievements and contributions.
* Helps others identify their long-range plans and goals.
* Maintains and communicates a positive, yet realistic outlook, in spite of organizational challenges in order to sustain morale.
* Recognizes and tackles morale problems.
* Uses a variety of approaches to energize and inspire others.
* Communicates a vision of excellence for others that motivates them to improve.

### Interview questions:

1. It can be difficult to establish an appropriate level of authority while also allowing employees the latitude to manage their own responsibilities. How have you addressed this challenge in the past? How have you empowered employees to perform at their best?
2. Think about the times you have been a team leader. What could you have done to be more effective?
3. Tell us about the most difficult situation you have had when leading a team. What happened and what did you do? Was it successful? Emphasize the “single” most important thing you did?
4. Give an example of how you have been successful at empowering a group of people in accomplishing a task.
5. What have you done to make sure that your subordinates can be productive? Give an example.
6. When do you give positive feedback to people? Tell me about the last time you did. Give an example of how you handle the need for constructive criticism with a subordinate or peer.
7. Give an example of a time in which you felt you were able to build motivation in your co-workers or subordinates at work.
8. What is the toughest group that you have had to get cooperation from? Describe how you handled it. What was the outcome?
9. How do you get subordinates to produce at a high level? Give an example.
10. How do you deal with people whose work exceeds your expectations?
11. Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.
12. Give an example of how you have been successful at empowering either a person or a group of people into accomplishing a task.
13. Give an example of your ability to build motivation in your co-workers, classmates, and even if on a volunteer committee.

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Performance Management**

Develops and implements strategies that optimize individual performance within the organization.

### Key Behaviors:

* Develops and uses measures and rewards to enhance performance.
* Translates new performance management policies into actionable goals for one’s own organization and holds self and others accountable to achieving the goals.
* Customizes an organizational approach to performance management by balancing the organization’s unique cultural characteristics and constraints with performance management policy.
* Holds self and others accountable for complying with performance management policy and procedures
* Sets clear, well-defined performance outcomes and tracks progress.
* Establishes means of measuring performance and objectives.
* Seeks performance feedback from supervisors, peers, and subordinates.
* Addresses performance problems promptly.
* Provides regular, on-going performance feedback to others.

### Interview questions:

1. Discuss a situation in which you had to provide guidance to an employee on performance issues related to a specific project. What was your approach? What difficulties did you face? What solutions did you implement?
2. Of your current assignments, which do you consider having required the greatest amount of effort with regard to planning/organization? How have you accomplished this assignment? How would you asses your effectiveness?
3. Tell us about the most difficult situation you have had when leading a team. What happened and what did you do? Was it successful? Emphasize the “single” most important thing you did?
4. How do you manage cross-functional teams?
5. Describe a time that you serviced as a lead or supervisor for a group of employees. What was your approach to directing personnel? What challenges did you encounter and how did you overcome them?
6. Discuss any benchmarking (i.e., evaluating processes against best practices) or best practices (i.e., most efficient and effective way of accomplishing a goal) projects in which you have been involved. What steps do you take to complete this type of project? What was your approach?
7. How do you handle performance reviews? Tell me about a difficult one.
8. How often do you discuss a subordinate’s performance with him/her? Give an example.
9. Tell us about a specific development plan that you created and carried out with one or more of your employees. What was the specific situation? What were the components of the development plan? What was the outcome?
10. Tell us about a time when you had to take disciplinary action with someone you supervised.
11. Tell us about a time when you had to tell a staff member that you were dissatisfied with his or her work.
12. Tell us about a time when you had to use your authority to get something done. Where there any negative consequences?
13. There are times when people need extra help. Give an example of when you were able to provide that support to a person with whom you worked.
14. When do you give positive feedback to people? Tell me about the last time you did. Give an example of how you handle the need for constructive criticism with a subordinate or peer.
15. What performance standards do you have for your unit? How have you communicated them to your subordinates?
16. How do you let subordinates know what you expect of them?
17. How do you go about setting goals with subordinates? How do you involve them in this process?
18. Tell me about a time that you had to hire and build a team. How did you create an environment that fostered productivity and cooperation?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Decision Quality**

Makes sound decisions that take into account objectives, risks, implications, and agency and governmental regulations.

### Key Behaviors:

* Bases decisions on an analysis of short-range consequences or simple options, including people’s reactions and potential problems.
* Gathers sufficient information to identify gaps and variances before making a decision.
* Solicits the input of the appropriate people to improve the quality of a decision.
* Weighs the costs, benefits, risks, and chances for success in a decision.
* Focuses on objectives and results when considering the various alternatives to a decision.
* Foresees the long-range consequences or implications of different options.
* Bases decisions on higher principles and Agency and governmental regulations with the end goal always in mind.

### Interview questions:

1. Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
2. When was the last time something came up in a meeting that was not covered in the plan? What did you do? What were the results of your judgment?
3. What is the riskiest decision you have made? What was the situation? What happened?
4. On many occasions, managers have to make tough decisions. What was the most difficult one you have had to make?
5. What are some of the major decisions you have made over the past (6, 12, 18) months?
6. Give an example of a time in which you had to keep from speaking or not finish a task because you did not have enough information to come to a good decision.
7. Discuss an important decision you have made regarding a task or project at work. What factors influenced your decision?
8. Everyone has made some poor decisions or has done something that just did not turn out right. Has this happened to you? What happened?
9. Give an example of a time when there was a decision to be made and procedures were not in place?
10. Give an example of a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
11. When was the last time you made a key decision on the spur of the moment? What was the reason and result?
12. How do you go about developing information to make a decision? Give an example.
13. If you were interviewing for this position what would you be looking for in the applicants?
14. How do you involve others when you make a decision?
15. How quickly do you make decisions? Give an example.
16. In a current job task, what steps do you go through to ensure your decisions are correct/effective?
17. Tell us about a time when you had to defend a decision you made even though other important people were opposed to your decision.
18. What was your most difficult decision in the last 6 months? What made it difficult?
19. When you have to make a highly technical decision, how do you go about doing it?
20. What kind of decisions do you make rapidly? What kind takes more time? Give examples.
21. Describe a recent unpopular decision you made and what the result was.

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Financial Acumen**

Maintains and applies a broad understanding of financial management principles to ensure decisions are fiscally sound and responsible.

### Key Behaviors:

* Demonstrates broad understanding of financial management principles to direct organizational actions.
* Sets organizational priorities by aligning organizational finances with NIH strategic goals.
* Uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities.
* Identifies cost effective approaches.
* Prepares, justifies and/or administers the budget for the program area.
* Monitors the overall performance of the organization and adjusts allocation of finances based on progress against goals.
* Fosters an environment that encourages fiscal responsibility.

### Interview questions:

1. Organizations gather and interpret financial data in order to make comparisons and be able to solve complex problems. Provide an example of how you used financial data from a variety of sources to identify and resolve an issue.
2. Describe a time when you applied your skills in data analysis to make a recommendation on an issue or decision. What process did you use? What obstacles did you face? How was your recommendation received?
3. Describe a project or effort that you led that you were especially proud of. How did you manage your resources and budget?
4. Tell me about a time when you noticed that you were over budget for a program. What did you do to bring expenditures back in line without sacrificing quality? What was the health of the budget at the end of the program? What did you learn?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

**Risk Management**

Plans and implements measures that will avoid, overcome or compensate for elements of risk.

### Key Behaviors:

* Manages work and information within a strategic framework.
* Establishes or relies on proven risk management methods, models, and tools.
* Aligns efforts considering individual, division/branch/office, and organizational strategies.
* Identifies the risks of negative outcomes (including inadvertent error or fraud).
* Evaluates controls to help mitigate negative outcomes through prevention or detection and correction.
* Communicates the impact of identified risks and recommends corrective action.
* Examines and defines factors that could adversely affect project task completion, delivery of contractual work products or achievement of customer satisfaction
* Ensures ongoing compliance with regulatory requirements.
* Quantifies and assigns probabilities to risks and opportunities (level and likelihood)
* Develops solutions to mitigate risk and maximize value
* Conducts periodic review of activities to ensure work in compliance with risk objectives.
* Maintains consistent data.
* Collaborates with stakeholders and users to gain insight.

### Interview questions:

1. What is the riskiest decision you have made? What was the situation? What happened?
2. Give a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and login in solving a problem.
3. Give me an example of when you took a risk to achieve a goal. What was the outcome?
4. Sometimes it can be difficult to communicate the possible risks or potential down side to a project/plan/initiative. Describe a time when you had to do just that. How was the information you provided received? How were you able to get others to acknowledge the risk and modify their plan/actions?
5. Give an example of a time when you identified a risk to a planned project and developed a plan to mitigate that risk. What was your approach?
6. Describe a time when you identified an error that posed a significant risk and you were not the party responsible for the error. How did you communicate this information? How was the situation resolved?
7. When was the last time something came up in a meeting that was not covered in the plan? What did you do? What were the results of your judgment?
8. 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?
9. When was the last time you made a key decision on the spur of the moment? What was the reason and result?
10. When was the last time you were in a crisis? What was the situation? How did you react?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

|  |
| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

## NIH Competency Proficiency Scale

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Score | Proficiency Level | Description |
| **1** | **Fundamental Awareness** (basic knowledge) | You have a common knowledge or an understanding of basic techniques and concepts.* Focus on learning.
 |
| **2** | **Novice** (limited experience)  | You have the level of experience gained in a classroom and/or experimental scenarios or as a trainee on-the-job. You are expected to need help when performing this skill.* Focus on developing through on-the-job experience;
* You understand and can discuss terminology, concepts, principles and issues related to this competency;
* You utilize the full range of reference and resource materials in this competency.
 |
| **3** | **Intermediate** (practical application) | You are able to successfully complete tasks in this competency as requested. Help from an expert may be required from time to time, but you can usually perform the skill independently.* Focus is on applying and enhancing knowledge or skill;
* You have applied this competency to situations occasionally while needing minimal guidance to perform successfully;
* You understand and can discuss the application and implications of changes to processes, policies, and procedures in this area.
 |
| **4** | **Advanced** (applied theory) | You can perform the actions associated with this skill without assistance. You are certainly recognized within your immediate organization as "a person to ask" when difficult questions arise regarding this skill.* Focus is on broad organizational/professional issues;
* You have consistently provided practical/relevant ideas and perspectives on process or practice improvements which may easily be implemented;
* You are capable of coaching others in the application of this competency by translating complex nuances relating to this competency into easy to understand terms;
* You participate in senior level discussions regarding this competency;
* You assist in the development of reference and resource materials in this competency.
 |
| **5** | **Expert** (recognized authority) | You are known as an expert in this area. You can provide guidance, troubleshoot and answer questions related to this area of expertise and the field where the skill is used.* Focus is strategic;
* You have demonstrated consistent excellence in applying this competency across multiple projects and/or organizations;
* You are considered the “go to” person in this area within NIH and/or outside organizations;
* You create new applications for and/or lead the development of reference and resource materials for this competency;
* You are able to diagram or explain the relevant process elements and issues in relation to organizational issues and trends in sufficient detail during discussions and presentations, to foster a greater understanding among internal and external colleagues and constituents.
 |