

Executive Director Interview Process

Interviewing is one of the most important parts of the hiring process. It is your opportunity to assess the candidates skills, experiences, and qualifications, and to learn more about what is important to them in an organization and their role in it. The interview is also a time for them to get to know more about your organization and the team.

Within this resource you will find behavioral interview questions that we suggest you can use based on the sample Executive Director Skills Matrix. Once you find the best candidate, you can use the sample Executive Director Offer Letter as a starting point to formally extend the opportunity to them.

Preparing for the Interview Process

Decide on your interview format based on what fits your culture and process.

- 1:1 or a panel format
- In-person or virtual
- One interview or multiple interview stages

Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral interview questions are designed to assess how a candidate has handled situations in the past, which can be a good predictor of how they'll manage future workplace scenarios.

A best practice is to create an interview guide that allows each interviewer space to record their notes to capture the candidate name, date of interview, interviewer name, and any other organization specific information. Below are suggested questions that your interviewing team could use for the skills areas listed in the attached skills matrix.



Leadership and Team Building

- Can you describe a time when you had to lead a team through a challenging transition?
- Tell us about a moment when you had to motivate a team member who was not meeting expectations.

Strategic Planning and Financial Acumen

- Provide an example of a strategic initiative you developed and implemented. How did you measure its success?
- Describe an instance where you had to make a tough financial decision to ensure the organization's health.



Fundraising Ability and Budget Management

- Share a situation where you led a successful fundraising campaign. What was your strategy and how did you involve your team?
- Discuss a time when you had to adjust the organization's budget due to unforeseen circumstances. How did you approach this?

Communication and Conflict Resolution

- Can you tell us about a time when you had to deliver difficult news to your team or board? How did you handle it?
- Recall a conflict you faced in your organization. How did you resolve it?



Program Development and Innovation

- Describe a new program or initiative that you conceived and brought to life. What challenges did you face and how did they inform the development process?
- Give an example of how you have fostered innovation within your team or organization.

Change Management and Adaptability

- Tell us about a time when you led your organization through a significant change. What steps did you take to manage the transition?
- Share an instance when you had to adapt to a significant, unexpected change in organizational direction. How did you manage?



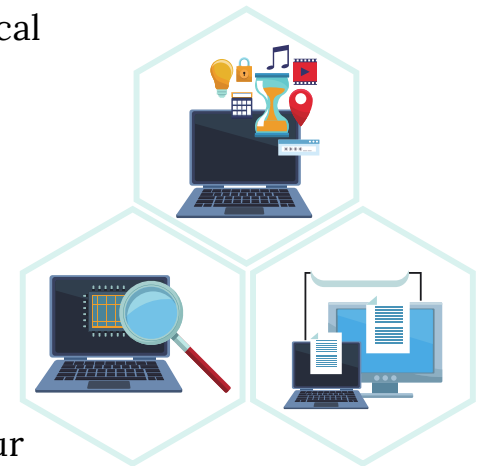


Cultural Competency and Ethical Judgment

- Describe a situation where you had to make a decision that involved a complex ethical dilemma.
- Can you give an example of how you have worked to promote diversity and inclusion within an organization?

Technology Literacy and Data Analysis

- Discuss a time when you had to implement a new technology solution to solve an organizational problem.
- Describe a project where data analysis played a critical role in decision-making. What was your approach to interpreting the data?



Governance Knowledge and Regulatory Compliance

- Share your experience with board governance.
- How have you worked with a board to achieve organizational goals?
- Can you provide an example of how you ensured your organization stayed compliant with regulatory requirements?

Marketing & PR

- Tell us about a time when you successfully raised the public profile of your organization. What strategies did you use?

Policy Development

- Give an example of a policy you developed. How did you ensure it was aligned with the organization's mission and goals?



These questions are designed to elicit specific examples of past behavior that can shed light on a candidate's skills and their potential fit for the Executive Director role. It's important to listen not only for the content of the answers but also for evidence of thought processes, problem-solving abilities, and the impact of the candidate's actions.

Selecting a Candidate

After interviewing all of the candidates who met the minimum requirements and passed the initial screening process, the selection team should meet to review feedback and input. It is important the decision on who to hire is made based on objective feedback and observations. This is important as it protects your organization from any risk that could arise out of making hiring decisions based on things that are not relevant to the job.



Making an offer

Once you identified the best candidate, it's time for one of the most exciting parts of the process, which is creating and extending the offer to the individual!

Your team should decide upon the details of the offer, such as:

- Salary
- Start Date
- Benefit offerings (time off, health & welfare, etc)
- Onboarding process



If your organization has any post-offer pre-employment steps, you will want to outline those in writing as a contingency of the offer acceptance. It is best to extend the offer verbally and then follow it up with a written offer.

Remember to research if there are any federal, state, or local regulations related to hiring and benefits that apply to your organization. Since there may be some required items to include in your offer letter language that would not be reflected in our sample offer letter below.

Sample Offer Letter

[Your Organization's Letterhead]

[Date]

[Applicant's Name]

[Applicant's Address] [City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [Applicant's Name],

We are pleased to extend an offer of employment to you for the position of Executive Director at [Your Organization's Name], a [description of your nonprofit's mission or purpose]. We believe that your skills, experience, and commitment to our cause make you an excellent fit for this role.

Position Title: Executive Director

Start Date: [Date]

Compensation: [Annual Salary]

Benefits: [List of benefits, such as health insurance, retirement plans, vacation time, etc.]

As the Executive Director, you will be responsible for leading and managing all aspects of our organization, including strategic planning, program development, fundraising, financial management, and staff supervision. Your leadership will be instrumental in advancing our mission and achieving our goals.

Before your employment can commence, please note that our standard pre-employment screening process may include reference checks, background checks, and drug screening. This process is conducted to ensure the safety and integrity of our organization, as well as to comply with relevant regulations.

We are confident that your expertise in [mention specific skills or experiences relevant to the role] will contribute significantly to the success of our organization. We look forward to working with you to make a positive impact on our community.

Please review the attached job description and let us know if you have any questions. If you accept this offer, please sign and return the enclosed copy of this letter by [Deadline Date] to [Insert who it goes to] via [method of return].

We are excited about the opportunity to welcome you to our team and to embark on this journey together. Thank you for your interest in joining [Your Organization's Name].

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title] [Your Organization's Name]

Enclosures: Job Description, Benefits Package, [Other regulatory attachments]

Skills Matrix for Executive Director

The skills matrix provides an overview of skills that are typically required for an Executive Director in a non-profit organization. When developing the job description and recruiting plan, your team will want to tailor this based on the needs of the role and the culture of the organization.

The matrix provides a holistic view of the following:

- Name of skill
 - It is important that your team go through the exercise of clarifying how your organization defines each of these, especially the soft skills. For example, leadership might mean different things to different people.
- Type of skill
 - Hard- Often these are technical skills and are learned through education or hands-on experience. These are concrete, measurable abilities that are often specific to a job.
 - Soft- These are traits and abilities that you develop throughout your entire life.
- Necessity of skill
 - Essential- These are non-negotiable skills that the candidate must possess to perform the job functions effectively.
 - Desirable- These skills are not critical for the job at the outset but would be beneficial for the candidate to have for better performance and future growth.
- Assessment method
 - It's important to determine how you might assess each skill during the recruitment process. For instance, role play and scenarios might be used for conflict resolution, whereas a practical assessment could be more fitting for assessing technology literacy.

Once employed, the matrix can also be used as a tool both when assessing an individual's strengths and areas for development.

Skills/Competencies	Category	Essential/Desirable	Assessment Method
Leadership	Soft	Essential	Interview, References
Strategic Planning	Hard	Essential	Case Study, Interview
Financial Acumen	Hard	Essential	Interview, Qualifications
Fundraising Ability	Hard	Essential	Past Performance, References
Communication	Soft	Essential	Interview, Writing Sample
Project Management	Hard	Desirable	Interview, Past Performance
Networking	Soft	Essential	Interview, References
Program Development	Hard	Essential	Interview, Past Projects
Budget Management	Hard	Essential	Interview, Case Study
Team Building	Soft	Essential	Group Interview, References
Conflict Resolution	Soft	Essential	Role Play, References
Innovation	Soft	Desirable	Interview, Past Performance
Change Management	Hard	Essential	Interview, References
Policy Development	Hard	Desirable	Interview, Review of Written Policies
Marketing & PR	Hard	Desirable	Interview, Portfolio Review

Skills/Competencies	Category	Essential/Desirable	Assessment Method
Adaptability	Soft	Essential	Interview, References
Ethical Judgment	Soft	Essential	Interview, Scenarios
Technology Literacy	Hard	Desirable	Practical Assessment