THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Hiring Toolkit for Staff Positions

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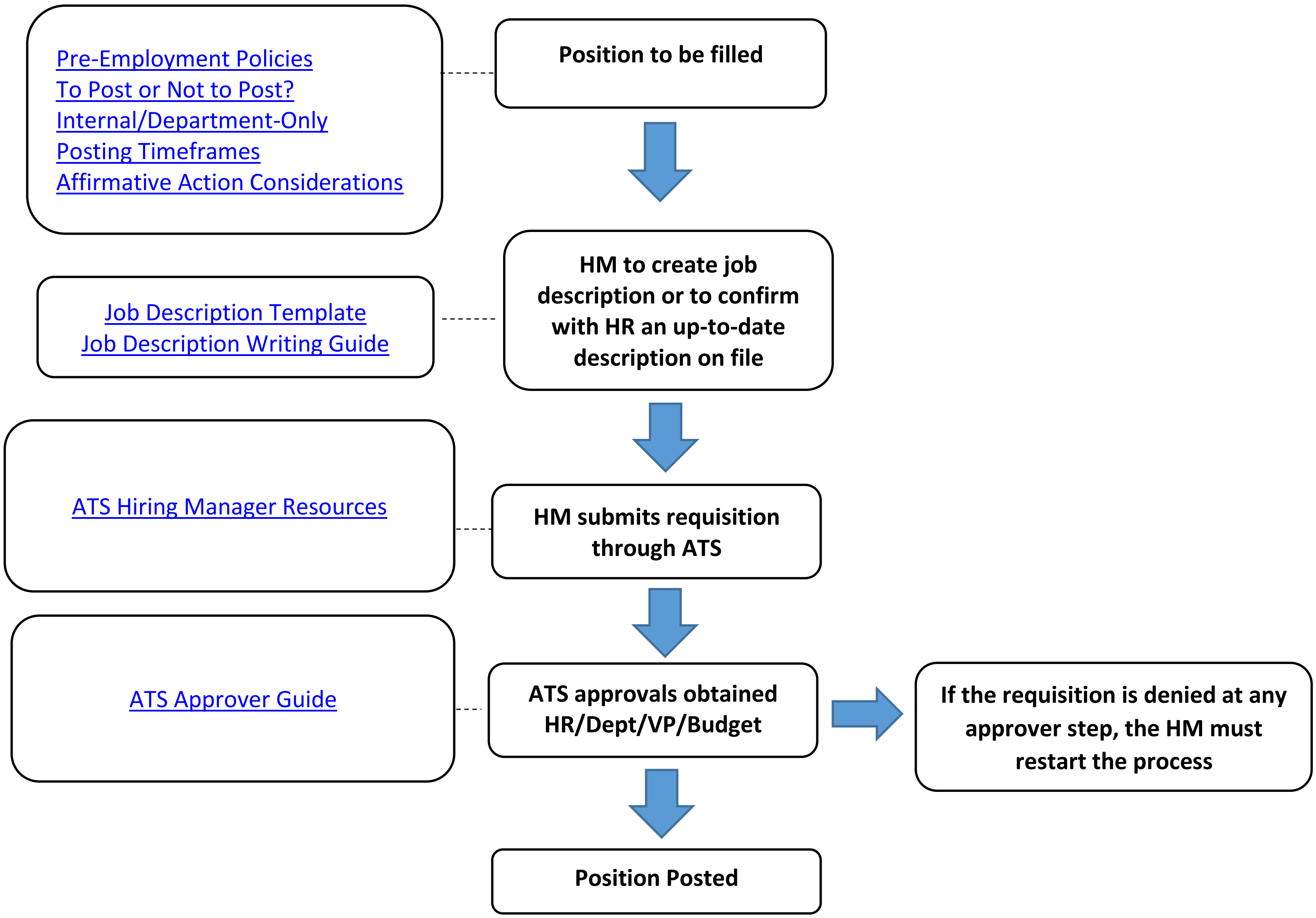
Posting a Job



- All positions will be posted by Human Resources (HR) through our Applicant Tracking System (ATS).
- The Hiring Manager (HM) is responsible for developing and maintaining an accurate description of the essential responsibilities of the job, which is to be maintained in HR.
- HR will review job descriptions for consistency across the University and recommend edits as necessary.
- The Department will be responsible for adding specific details needed within the posting.
- The last step in the ATS routing will be with HR and the position will be posted after this stage.
- Discuss with your HR Partner posting and sourcing strategies for position.
- Note that different VP units may have different processes in addition to those outlined in this toolkit, such as a process to approve positions prior to submitting in the ATS.

To Post or Not to Post?

USM policy states that all full-time and part-time staff positions are required to be posted through the applicant tracking system unless one of the following exceptions apply:

- Interim
- Student worker/Graduate Assistant
- Job enlargement

An interim assignment is when an employee assumes a new position or additional duties on an interim or temporary basis, oftentimes used to cover job responsibilities during a vacancy. Keep in mind that while interim assignments are not required to be posted, if the position ever becomes part or full-time the position will be required to be posted at that time. Therefore, consideration should be given to who is selected to fill the temporary/interim role.

For example, a supervisor position of a team of 5 project managers becomes vacant. All 5 project managers may be qualified and/or interested in the supervisor position. If you hand select one of the project managers for the interim role, you are essentially giving that person a competitive advantage in the selection process as they will have had the opportunity to learn the job and demonstrate their abilities, for which the others are not being given the same opportunity. In this situation, consider instead an informal selection process for deciding who should receive the interim role (some fair way to make the decisions where everyone interested receives consideration). You may also consider having the project managers rotate the supervisory role giving all interested parties an opportunity to gain the experience and demonstrate their abilities.

Student worker positions are posted through the student jobs portal managed through Career Services.

A job enlargement is when a position is assigned additional duties that are not temporary in nature. These duties may be of a similar level of the position's current responsibility or of a greater responsibility. So long as the position is essentially the same, even if given a new title, no job posting is necessary and a pay raise may be given according to the Salary Guidelines. When the job responsibilities are of a higher nature, the job change may be viewed as a promotion. Even so, a job posting is not required if the position is essentially the same, even with higher level responsibilities, the former position will not be backfilled, and there are no other incumbents in the position. Consultation with HR is required for making this determination.

For example, the department currently has a financial coordinator position. Additional workload of a higher level is added elevating the position to a financial manager. Despite the increase in responsibilities, the incumbent is still responsible for performing the primary duties that were part of the financial coordinator role plus the additional responsibilities. Also, the financial coordinator position is not being backfilled to compensate for the job change. Lastly, there are no other financial coordinators in the department who may be eligible/qualified for the position (such as in the previous example of project managers). If all three criteria are met, the job enlargement may occur, and a pay raise may be given according to the Salary Guidelines.

Please note that the policy does allow the AVP for Human Resources to waive the posting requirements in critical situations. Please consult with Human Resources for more information.

Internal/Department-Only Postings

Hiring Managers have the discretion of posting positions as internal-only (limits applicants to just current USM employees). The position is still required to be posted using the ATS. Hiring Managers should indicate in the requisition request that the posting will be internal only. If at any point you do wish to consider external candidates, you will need to contact your HR Partner and will be required to repost the position on the external job site for a minimum of 5 business days.

While USM desires to provide promotional opportunities within, we must also be mindful of our diversity efforts. Bypassing the posting process may limit the diversity of the applicant pool. If your department is already diverse, this may not be an issue. However, if the department lacks diversity (or if the position you are recruiting for has an Affirmative Action goal), then it is recommended that the decision to limit the posting to internal-only be reconsidered. This decision must be balanced with the qualifications of the current staff as well as reorganization or budget needs.

Posting Timeframes

USM policy states that all positions must be posted for a minimum of five (5) working days unless otherwise waived by the Associate Vice President for Human Resources. Positions may be posted for a longer duration of time, which should be indicated on the requisition at the time submitted (please state the number of days to post and not a date, such as "post for 10 days").

A Hiring Manager may request a position be "posted until filled" as opposed to posting for a specific duration of time. A reason may be that the position is difficult to fill and there is a high probability that a candidate will not be selected from the initial pool of applicants and more applicants will be desired. However, posting until filled creates a unique problem in that you are still taking applications while interviewing and making hiring decisions thus not necessarily giving all applicants consideration.

For example, the job is posted on August 1. On August 15, well after the 5-day minimum posting requirement, the Hiring Manager looks through the applicants and selects 3-4 to interview. One of those is extended an offer. However, twenty more applicants applied between August 15 and when the offer was made who did not receive consideration despite their qualifications.

To resolve this issue, you will need to identify a cut-off date for your applicant pool (such as 10 days after posted) and first review and consider only those applicants who applied before the cut-off date. If you are able to hire from that pool, you do not have to consider any other candidates who applied after the cut-off date regardless of their qualifications. If you are unable to make a decision from that pool, you can extend your cut-off date and repeat. The important part with this process is that you give no consideration to anyone who applied after the cut-off date. You should post your cut-off date in the special instructions section of the job posting, such as, "Candidates who apply within the first 10 days of posting will receive first consideration."

Affirmative Action Considerations

The University of Southern Mississippi offers to all persons equal access to employment opportunities without regard to age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, sex identity, genetic information, religion, race, color, national origin, and/or veteran status pursuant to applicable state and federal law. It is the responsibility of all persons making employment decisions to support this policy and ensure the work environment is free from discrimination as established in the University's Affirmative Action Plan.

So what is Affirmative Action?

- An Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) is a requirement of Executive Order 11246 which mandates government contractors take affirmative actions to ensure equal opportunities exist in every aspect of the employment process.
- An AAP is a management tool designed to ensure equal employment opportunity for minorities, women, veterans and persons with disabilities.
- Affirmative Action is based on the premise that over time, and absent discrimination, the University's workforce will reflect the ethnic, racial and sex make-up of the labor markets used to recruit applicants.
- As part of the AAP, we are required to conduct an assessment annually of our labor markets and identify gaps where minorities, women, veterans and persons with disabilities are underrepresented (i.e. a greater representation in the workforce than at USM). Those gaps are then translated into goals.
- Goals are created for all EEO job groups for each campus location as well as USM as a whole
- Goals are not quotas.
- Our obligation under the AAP is to make "good faith efforts" to achieve our goals by increasing the pool of qualified minority, female, veteran and disabled candidates when recruiting for open positions.
- We identify our good faith efforts as part of our AAP each year.
- All leaders will receive training on the affirmative action plan, identified goal areas, and good faith efforts action plan on an annual basis.
- Examples of USM's good faith efforts include:
    - Analyze all job descriptions to ensure descriptions accurately reflect position functions
    - Review minimum qualifications of like-positions to ensure consistency across departments
    - Utilize the Mississippi Department of Employment Services, job fairs and recruiting programs sponsored by local community colleges and other community organizations.
    - Identify and utilize targeted recruitment sites for qualified minority and female applicants.

As a Hiring Manager, how can you support our affirmative action efforts?

- Partner with University HR to ensure your job descriptions and postings are consistent with like jobs across the University and accurately reflect appropriate minimum qualifications.
- Adhere to University hiring policies.
- Utilize Diversity Recruitment Resources to source applicants.
- Ensure all participants in the hiring process receive Committee Training.
- Consider diversity when selecting committee members.
- Do not make any employment decisions based on a protected class.

Applicant Tracking System
& Training Guides

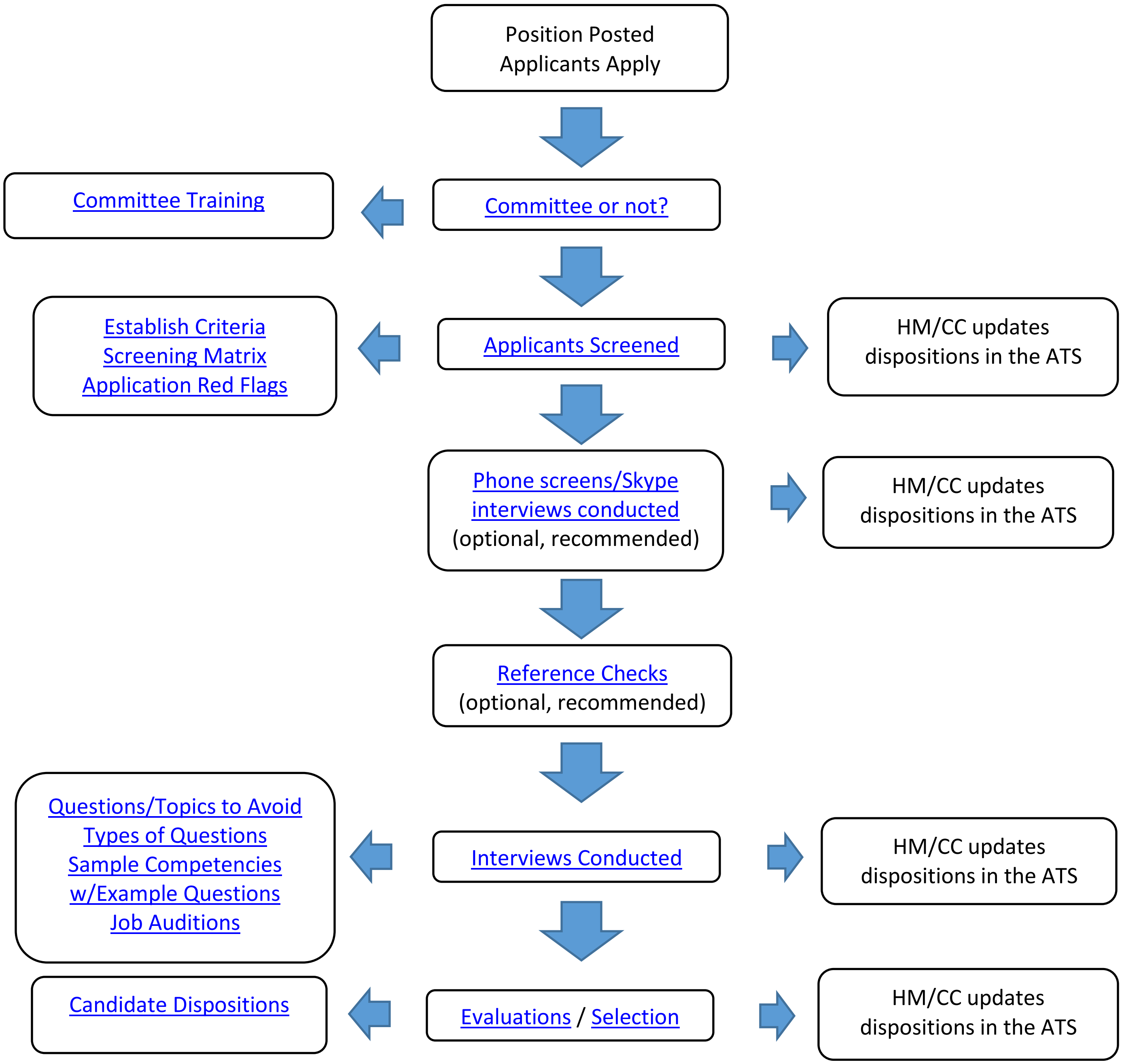
The current Applicant Tracking System (ATS) used by the University is Cornerstone. Faculty and Staff will access Cornerstone using their Soar credentials.

Examples of what you will find on the ATS – Hiring Manager Resources webpage:

- FAQ's about Cornerstone
- Requisition Request Steps and a Demonstration Video
- Requisition Approval Guide
- Faculty Recommendation Letter Steps
- Offer Letter to Background Check Steps and a Demonstration Video
- A full Cornerstone Training Video
- Dates and times of upcoming live demonstrations
- The link to access Cornerstone

These step-by-step guides provide you screen shots and instructions for performing each task within the hiring process and are also linked through this toolkit as you move through the recruiting cycle.

Screening/Selection



- All positions are required to be posted for at least 5 business days.
- All applicants are required to complete an online application in order to receive consideration.
    - Job postings can require attachment of resume, cover letter, reference letters, or additional documents.
- The Hiring Manager (HM) may delegate responsibility for steps in the process to the Committee Chair (CC) if one is selected.
- Reference checks are optional and may be performed at any stage of the process at the HM or CC's discretion.
- The "Special instructions" section of the job posting should contain information regarding posting closing date, required attachments, and other information needing to be conveyed to candidates.

Committee or Not?

The use of a committee for staff positions is not required; however, committees are customarily formed for positions with a wide scope of responsibility and/or influence. A committee ensures applicants selected for interview and final consideration are evaluated by more than one individual and minimizes the potential for personal bias. The Hiring Manager should identify members who will have direct and indirect interaction with the applicant in the course of their job to participate in the committee. Committees should represent a diverse cross section of the staff.

The Hiring Manager should decide how they would like to use a committee throughout the process at the time the position is posted and make those connections and requests early to ensure that the committee members can accept the responsibilities that follow.

There are two different kinds of committees, and a committee can perform the singular function or a combination of both committee functions:

- Search Committees
    - Review the applicant pool (entirely) and make recommendations for who should be interviewed to the Hiring Manager.
    - Search Committee members should understand and agree on what the minimum and preferred qualifications are for the position based on the job posting prior to reviewing applicants.
- Interview Committees
    - Participate in the interview phase (phone and/or in-person) and make recommendations on the candidates' ability to successfully perform the job.
    - Consider using internal customers, peers, or your HR Partner when developing an interview committee.

For positions that are frequently recruited using a committee, the mix of members should change frequently, as well, to minimize the risk of "group think" or collective bias.

No more than 6 members are recommended for a committee and composition of the committee should be based on the nature of the position. Consider the following when selecting committee members:

- An individual who has a strong understanding of the role and its contribution to the department
- A job specialist (technical or functional)
- An individual who will interact closely with the position and/or serves as a main customer

Committee members must ensure no conflict of interest in relation to the applicants under consideration and must never be an applicant him/herself. Committee members must sign a Confidentiality Agreement form at the start of the process. Committee members should ensure they are well-equipped for their role in the recruitment process to ensure fairness and compliance.

The Hiring Manager and/or committee chair is required to provide Committee Training on the process to all committee participants.

Sample Committee Training Agenda

- **Sign** Confidentiality Agreement

- **Review the job description for the posted position**
  - What is the role and qualifications of this position?

- **Establish criteria to be evaluated**

- **Establish questions that will be used in phone screens and/or in-person interviews**
  - Establish how and by whom the questions will be established
  - Questions should correlate with the established criteria
  - Use Sample Competencies with Example Questions as a guide

- **Create a schedule**

- **Complete any required training**
  - Review the contents of the Screening/Selection portion of the Hiring Toolkit
  - Review Implicit Bias

- **Determine next steps**
  - Determine who is to do what by when and establish next steps

Implicit Bias

Key points to remember:

- Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.
- These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.
- Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness.
- The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance.
- These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations.

Key Characteristics of Implicit Biases:

- Implicit and explicit biases are **related but distinct mental constructs**. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold **do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs** or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own ingroup**, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.
- Implicit biases are **malleable**. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.

*Taken from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Ohio State University

Next Steps…

- Continue the conversation with friends, family, colleagues
- Learn more about implicit bias and how it impacts your life
- Take the "Project Implicit" assessment

Addressing Gender Pronouns

When addressing candidates prior to knowing their preferred gender pronouns:

- Use gender neutral pronouns such as they/them instead of he/him or she/her
- Avoid using Mrs. or Mr., instead just use the person's name
- Do not ask their preferred gender pronoun during the interview process as this is protected information; however, if they share it with you then you should honor their request

Establishing Criteria

Criteria are the competencies and qualifications you will establish to screen applicants, determine questions, and make decisions. Criteria is based off of the minimum and preferred qualification as taken from the posted job description, including the required knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). KSAs represent competencies needed in the job, such as experience with Microsoft Office or a soft skill like professionalism.

Established criteria must be consistent with the minimum qualifications of the job per the job description. In other words if the job description states that a minimum of 5 years of experience is required, the established criteria must be no less than 5 years of experience. If an established criteria is "strong communication skills" and the person submits a resume with typos and inconsistencies, you may consider that information when assessing the candidate's qualifications. The minimum qualifications serve as the base-line for establishing the applicant pool. If minimum qualifications are not met, the applicant's status should be changed to "not hired" and they should be eliminated from consideration.

All applicants who meet the minimum qualifications compose your applicant pool. Once your applicant pool is established, you then need a way to begin evaluating applicants and determining "best qualified" for interviews. Note you are under no obligation to interview every candidate who meets the minimum qualifications of the job. In this stage you may elevate your requirements to begin differentiating candidates. For instance, though only a bachelor's degree may be required, you may score applicants higher for having master's degrees.

Establishing criteria will also be the basis of the questions to ask in both the phone screen and interview stages. For instance, if experience with Microsoft Word is an established criteria, you will want to ask questions specific to evaluating their ability to use Microsoft Word. Refer to Sample Competencies with Example Questions for more examples.

When establishing criteria, consideration may be given to the current needs and composition of the department. For instance, if the department is well-established with many senior staff, consideration for a more entry level candidate could be given; whereas, if the department currently has many new and/or vacant positions then more weight could be given to the preferred qualification of more years of experience or a higher level of competency. While minimum qualifications should never deviate from what is listed on the job description, preferred qualifications can change depending on the current needs of the department.

The stages of criteria include:

1. Using the qualifications on the posted job description, criteria is established. Examples of established criteria include 5 years of related experience, a master's degree, proficiency in Microsoft Excel, or strong communication skills.
2. Established criteria will be used for the initial screening of applications to determine your applicant pool (meets minimum qualifications) and then to begin evaluating "best qualified" for further consideration.
3. Established criteria will be used to formulate questions for the phone screen and/or on-site interview.
4. Established criteria will be used to evaluate candidates and determine your hiring decision.

These stages are explored further in the next sections of the hiring toolkit.

Screening Applicants

Prior to reviewing applications and making screening decisions, the Hiring Manager and/or committee chair must understand and agree on what the minimum qualifications and established criteria are for the position. Qualifications will be based on the posted job description.

All applicants who meet the minimum qualifications must receive consideration. Consideration does not mean that they must be interviewed; however, they must stay in "in review" status until the screening process is complete. Any applicant who does not meet minimum qualifications can be immediately moved to "not hired" and should not receive consideration.

The applicants who meet minimum qualifications and are "in review" status compose your applicant pool. The Hiring Manager is under no obligation to interview every one of these candidates and can now employ a screening process to select the "best qualified" candidates for consideration. Please note that "best qualified" is not the same as "most qualified." The Hiring Manager is under no obligation to select the applicant with the most education and experience as qualifications are broader than just those two essentials (i.e. competencies).

For example, applicants with extensive work history may be eliminated due to an unprofessional resume with typos and grammatical errors. Or a candidate with only 5 years of specific experience in the job duties may be considered a better candidate than one with 10 years of related but not specifically the same experience.

In order to make these decisions, it is recommended that you utilize a screening matrix. The matrix allows you to identify your criteria and rate applicants accordingly. You then select the top candidates (how many is up to you) to move on in the process. If those candidates are not successful, you can then move on to the next highest rated candidates, etc. The screening matrix enables a bias-free evaluation of the candidates as well as documentation for why decisions were made.

If you have received an unmanageable amount of applications for a posting, you can work with your HR Partner to take steps to narrow down the applicant pool without having to review and consider every single qualified candidate.

A Note on Motivational Fit

Motivational fit is defined as the extent to which an applicant's expectations of what they will get out of a job match up with what the job provides. Why are they interested in this job? Will the job meet those needs? Will the job be satisfying and engaging? Motivational fit is considered one of the strongest indicators for predicting success in both job performance and longevity. Consider making motivational fit an established criteria for every position. Refer to the Sample Competencies with Example Questions for more information.

Sample Screening Matrix

Position: Name of Position

Posting Date: Date Position was Posted

Candidate	Associate's Degree	1 year related exp	Academia Experience	Comm/Prof	Total Points	Comments
Sally Smith	1	1	0	0	2	Selected for interview
Peter Jones					2	Selected for interview
Alfred Sooza					1	Selected for interview
Penelope Whip					1	Selected for interview
Susie Shaw					0	In review
Jenny Ginger					0	In review
Lonny Lanes					0	In review
Dena Patrick	DNM	0	0	0	DNM	Not hired

The column headers represent the established criteria as determined by the job description and posting. At this stage, criteria should be limited to what can be determined directly from the application.

If Sally had a B.S. when only an Associate's was required, she "exceeds" expectations and scored a 1. If she had more than 1 year of related experience, she may score higher there as well. According to the legend a 0 represents that the criteria is met but not exceeded.

The top 4 rated candidates were selected for interviews. If no selection is made from those 4, the hiring manager can move down the list and select more for consideration. The HM can determine the number of candidates to further consider, but must consider all candidates with same total points. For instance, if three candidates score a 1 and you want to consider one of those candidates (or a 0), you must consider everyone with that score)

If a person receives a DNMC on any of the minimum criteria, the comment should read "not hired" and they should no longer be considered a candidate.

The legend can be changed

Legend:

Does not meet criteria (DNMC)- Not hired

Meets criteria- 0 points

Exceeds criteria- 1 point

Click here for a Screening Matrix form

Application Red Flags

When reviewing applications/resumes, be on the lookout for red flags. Although red flags themselves are not necessarily reasons for eliminating an applicant from consideration, they may be useful in developing your line of questioning.

Some examples of red flags include:

- Gaps between employment
    - Did this person find themselves unintentionally without a job (i.e., fired), which is why there wasn't straight employment?
    - Did this person resign from positions without having a new one lined up indicating they impulsively quit?
    - Did this person take another job that didn't work out and didn't put that on their application?

- Short stints at jobs
    - Is this person a job hopper?

- Drastic changes in types of jobs
    - Does this person really want to do something else and is just settling?
    - Has this person been unable to find work in their field?
    - Does this person have a career path or just jobs?

- Career ladder discrepancies
    - Why did they change jobs for a lower level position or pay cut?
    - Is this a step down for them? Why are they interested?

- Reasons for leaving
    - Are these reasons going to affect their satisfaction in our job as well?
    - Have those reasons been rectified?
    - Do the reasons given match with job changes and dates of changes?
    - Do the reasons show good judgment?

- Indicated preferences (shift, pay, location, etc.)
    - Was this person able to articulate why they were interested in something that may seem undesirable?
    - Is this person going to take something just for "a" job but keep looking?
    - Is this person just trying to get a foot in the door and then hope that you will offer the preference desired? Is that going to happen?

Red flags are not disqualifiers, they are subjects to pursue in your questioning and evaluation.

Social Media Searches

Many Hiring Managers like to review a candidate's social media to assess professionalism. However, this practice presents challenges because it also exposes information about the candidate that could be considered protected, such as age, national origin, religion, pregnancy, number of children, marital status, disability, etc. Once the Hiring Manager (or others involved in the process) have looked at the information, it is hard to prove it wasn't part of the consideration if ever challenged. Therefore, it is recommended that the Hiring Manager enlists a third-party unaffiliated with the hiring process to conduct the search and report back on only relevant job related factors. Relevant information might include vulgar posts or images, discriminatory language, or the use of social media to harass. Please consult with Human Resources if you have questions.

Phone Screens/Skype Interviews

Phone screens (or use of Skype or similar) are conducted to further drill down on candidate qualifications. Although a candidate may look well qualified on paper, they may be lacking the competencies required for the job that are difficult to evaluate from an application/resume alone. Therefore, a phone screen allows a mini-interview to assess skills, knowledge and abilities without requiring the extensive time commitment that a full interview entails.

Also, a phone screen is a good opportunity to discuss deal breakers like schedule, travel, salary, location, and benefits. A phone screen enables you to ensure the candidate understands the job requirements and is still interested before anyone's time is wasted finding that out at the end of the process (such as turning down an offer because of salary).

The questions to ask in a phone screen are to be established in advance, based on the criteria established, and should be asked to each candidate being interviewed for consistent evaluation. A phone screen should be treated like any interview, consult the Questions and Topics to Avoid beforehand and a Phone Screen Evaluation should be completed afterwards. You should then narrow down your candidates for on-site interviews based on the evaluations from the phone screens.

If you are dissatisfied with your candidates after the phone screen, go back to your screening matrix and identify the next group of applicants for consideration. If none of the applicants meet minimum qualifications or pass the phone screen step, you may repost. While you can reevaluate your preferred qualifications with this applicant pool, you cannot decrease minimum qualifications without reposting the job (and having a new job description reviewed and approved by HR).

Note that the candidate with the most experience and education is not always the "best" candidate for the job. You are under no obligation to hire the person with the "most" qualifications. The "best" candidate may be determined by skills, knowledge, abilities, salary expectations, interest in the position and other competencies. Oftentimes the "most" qualified person is "over" qualified for the position. Being overqualified in and of itself should not disqualify a person but may be a negative if it skews their salary expectations or would inhibit their interest in the job duties to be performed, for instance.

When to talk money?

You are encouraged to talk salary, at least generally, as early in the process as possible. In fact, HR encourages you to include salary information in the job posting. If a person's expectations for pay is considerably different than what we are offering, it is recommended you know that as soon as possible so as not to waste time and money pursuing someone who will not be interested. Just remember to never overpromise or set unrealistic expectations.

Sample Phone Screen Evaluation

Candidate's Name:		**Date:**	
Job Title:		**Completed By:**	

1. **Why are you interested in this position?**

2. **Confirm applicant's interest in pay, schedule, and location.**

Possible Deal breakers

3. **Confirm applicant's education and certifications.**

The questions should be determined based off of the criteria being evaluated.

4. **Describe your administrative assistant experience.**

5. **What is your experience specific to contracts and budgets?**

6. **If I were to contact your current manager, would they recommend you for this position? Why or why not?**

7. **Share overview of position and ask for questions and response.**

1- Does not meet criteria; 2- Meets criteria; 3- Exceeds criteria

Scale may be changed

Criteria	Rating	Comments
Motivational Fit		
Education/certification		Criteria is determined by the qualifications and KSAs of the posted job description
Overall Experience		
Contract & Budget Experience		
Professionalism		

8. **Additional Comments:**

<u>Recommend:</u>

Recommend can be "Recommend for interview" or "Not Hired" or "Keep In Review pending other candidates", etc.

Click here for a [Phone Screen](#) template

International Hires

There are many considerations and preparations that must be made when considering International Hires. Consult these additional resources as a guide for the hiring process for international candidates H1B Toolkit and step-by-step process guides based on visa type.

A Hiring Manager is not obligated to sponsor applicants for work visas and may reject applicants with such a need. While national origin is a protected class, you are not making a decision to not hire because of where the person is from but because you do not wish to sponsor the applicant. That is allowable under law. In fact, our application asks questions about visa status and sponsorship so that information is available to you as part of your screening process. If the applicant answers yes to requiring visa sponsorship and the Hiring Manager does not have the funds in the budget, that can in and of itself be a screening criteria (i.e. anyone who needs sponsorship is automatically eliminated).

If a candidate will need visa services to work in the United States, the Hiring Manager should consult with the Office of International Student and Scholars Services (ISSS) to determine a candidate's ability to work in the United States or can be provided the appropriate visa to work at USM. When possible, this should be done prior to inviting the candidate to campus as a finalist. Finalists must either meet in person with the ISSS to review their immigration status and potential additional information needed or communicate via email.

Reference Checks

Contacting references provided by the candidate is optional and can be done at any stage of the process. As reference checks can be time consuming, it is recommended that they are not completed sooner than after the initial screening as the candidate pool has narrowed to a more reasonable number of applicants at that point.

If the candidate is currently or previously employed at the University, contacting their current or previous supervisor to conduct a reference check is required. Hiring Managers should reach out to the current or previous supervisor prior to extending an offer.

A reference check form should be used when checking references in all instances to document the information obtained and to remain constant through the reference process.

Requests for information from references may be robust and detailed asking about knowledge, skills and abilities. The information requested should mirror the criteria being evaluated. The information gathered should be job-related and should not be in conflict with the Questions and Topics to Avoid. Please note that many companies have policies against providing information about the employee so while we may ask you may be unable to get answers, which is typical.

It is best practice to notify candidates when you are about to begin reference checks. This allows the candidate an opportunity to alert their references that contact will be made, as well as notify their current supervisor of their job search, if needed, as that might be a concern to them.

Note that internal references from a USM supervisor should be limited to documented performance only. It is unacceptable for a current supervisor to relay issues with performance or behavior that have never been discussed with the employee formally, such as in a disciplinary action or a performance evaluation. A supervisor should limit their feedback to the most recent performance evaluation and any active documented counselings. If there are issues with the employee that are not documented, the supervisor should simply respond, “No documented performance/behavior issues.” It is also improper for a supervisor to give a positive reference contrary to performance or behavior issues; for instance, not sharing the issues in an attempt to transfer the employee out of their area of responsibility. It is important to ensure that the information being shared is fair to all parties involved.

Negative information in a reference is not an automatic disqualifier. Any information obtained are subjects to pursue in your questioning and evaluation of the candidate.

	Is a reference check required?	**What form do I use?**
Candidate currently works at USM	Yes	Internal reference
Candidate previously worked at USM	Yes	Reference check
Candidate has never worked at USM	No	Reference check
References provided by candidate are external to USM	No	Reference check
References provided by candidate are internal to USM	No	Reference check

Sample External Reference Check

(Used for any references provided by the candidate, current or past Non-USM Supervisors, and past USM supervisors for candidates who are no longer employed at USM)

Candidate Name:	Position in Consideration:
Reference Name:	Date:

1. What is the nature of your relationship with this Candidate? (Probe for Professional/Academic/Personal knowledge; length of relationship; and still in contact)

2. Can you describe the key duties and responsibilities of the position this candidate had with your organization?

3. Can you comment in regard to this candidates performance in: (1=Poor, 3=Average, 5=Excellent)

This list should include the established criteria

Ability to Multi-task:	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
Customer Service:	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
Quality of Work:	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
Use/Knowledge of relevant technology:	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

4. What area of responsibility did the candidate excel in?

5. What area of responsibility did the candidate have the most room to grow in?

6. Would you rehire this candidate if you had the opportunity?

7. Would you recommend this candidate for __________________ Position?

8. Is there anyone else you can think of that I should contact as a reference for this candidate?

Any additional comments as we consider this candidate for a position:

Reference Checked By:

Date:

Click here for an External Reference Check form

Sample Internal Reference Check

(Used for current or past USM supervisors if candidate is still employed at USM)

Candidate Name:	Position in Consideration:
Reference Name:	Date:

1. Can you describe the key duties and responsibilities of the position this candidate has/had in your department?

2. For the most recent performance evaluation, what was the candidate's overall rating?

3. What competencies are documented as strengths?

4. What competencies are documented as areas in need of improvement or development?

5. Does the candidate have any current documented counselings on file? What are the issues being addressed?

6. What is the status of the documented counselings? Has the candidate resolved the issue(s)?

Reference Checked By:

Date:

Click here for an Internal Reference Check form

On-Site Interviews

All Hiring Managers, committee members and others involved in the interview and selection of candidates must attend Committee Training on the hiring process and become familiar with basic interview guidelines. Hiring Managers or committees can use the Sample Competencies with Example Questions to craft an interview script for both phone and in-person interviews. The interview questions are to be established in advance, based on the criteria established, and should be asked to each candidate being interviewed for consistent evaluation. This criteria should be added to the Interview Evaluation form and should be tailored to the specific position based on the qualifications and KSAs of the posted job description.

The Hiring Manager and/or their proxy (ex., administrative assistant or committee chair) is responsible for scheduling interviews. Considerations when scheduling interviews:

- Who will participate in the interviews and what role will they play?
- Where and when will the interviews be held?
- Who will train the interview participants and prepare them? When will that be done?
- Who will help manage travel arrangements and reimbursement, if needed?
- Will meals be necessary? Who will arrange and who will be involved?
- Will the candidates need transportation and who will provide?
- If assistance with disability accommodations is needed, contact the AA/EEO office in HR.

You want to accomplish 3 things in an interview:

1. Obtain information about the candidate's qualifications to determine if they meet the established criteria
2. Provide information about the job and University to the candidate
3. Document the interview on an evaluation form

Establish rapport

- Greet the applicant with a pleasant smile and handshake.
- Make appropriate small talk ("Did you find us ok?"). Be advised, the Questions and Topics to Avoid **apply even in small talk**.
- Explain who you are and how the interview process will work.

Gather information

- Refer to Questions and Topics to Avoid.
- Verify specific information on the application/resume.
- Verify that the applicant is interested in the position available (hours, pay, travel, location, etc.).
- Gain information by using the Sample Competencies with Example Questions.
- Be sure to ask the same questions to all candidates.

Sell the job

- Encourage the candidate to ask questions and answer the questions as honestly as possible. Keep in mind that we do not want to mislead candidates. The more accurately you describe the job, environment and expectations, both pros and cons, the less surprises there are for new hires. Telling about the challenges of the job can be just as important as selling the good, but of course you want to emphasize the positives over the negatives.

Close

- Thank the candidate for their time. Explain the next step in the process so the candidate knows what to expect and when it will be.

Evaluation

- Complete the Interview Evaluation immediately following the interview while your impression is still fresh.

COVID UPDATE
During the current conditions where social distancing is required, selections can be made through phone and other electronic means of interviewing (skype, zoom, etc.) keeping in mind all interview considerations regardless of the interview format.

Interview Notification

When scheduling interviews with candidates, the best recommendation is to contact each candidate by phone to make the arrangements and then follow up via e-mail. When you follow up in writing, it is recommended that you utilize a professional notification with complete information about the interview process so that the candidate can prepare accordingly.

For instance:

Interview Details:

Name	Susie Candidate
Date	Tuesday, May 16, 2017
Time	1:00 p.m.
Location	The University of Southern Mississippi Hattiesburg Campus 118 College Dr., Hattiesburg, MS Human Resources McClemore Hall Rm 301
Attire	Business Professional

1:00 p.m.
Hiring Manager

Name:	Title:
Phoebe Buffay	Therapy Manager

2:00 p.m.
Interview Committee

Name:	Title
Dr. Ross Geller	Chair, Department of Anthropology
Rachel Green	Buyer
Joey Tribbiani	Actor
Chandler Bing	Transponder

(Please note participants could change due to last minute scheduling conflicts)

If you have questions, please contact Monica Geller at 601-266-5000.

Click here for an Interview Notification form

Questions and Topics to Avoid

Employment law prohibits making employment decisions based on the following:

Age	Sex	Sexual Orientation
Disability	Pregnancy	Gender Identity
Genetic Information	Religion	Race
Color	National Origin	Veteran Status

Any questions relating to these areas should ***never*** be used. Some examples are "Where are you from originally?" (national origin), "Where do you go to church?" (religion), "How old are you?" (age), or "Do you intend to have children?" (pregnancy). You also want to avoid how you phrase things: "We are looking for a recent college graduate" (age) or "young and energetic" (age) or "man's work" (sex).

Other areas to avoid:

Marital status	Number of children	Arrest record
Military discharge	Economic status	Mode of transportation
Medical problems	Attendance at previous jobs	

The bottom line is that these areas are not job-related. Anyone can be arrested but that doesn't mean they were guilty; the background check provides us with any information we should know. How a person gets to work is irrelevant as long as they indicate that they ***can*** get to work. Therefore, instead of asking if they have children or have a car- something that may concern you about their ability to get to work reliably- you should ask instead if they can meet the work schedule. Also, asking questions about attendance issues at previous jobs can be tricky as it may reveal medical conditions, something you shouldn't ask about or discriminate against. Your questions should stick to if the candidate is able and willing to perform the duties of this position.

However, even if you don't ask, it is possible that the person might offer the information on their own. If this occurs:

- Do not write the information down
- Do not pursue the subject with the applicant
- Do not discuss amongst the committee members
- Do not base your decision on that information
- Get help from University Human Resources

Use care in crafting your questions sticking closely to the job-related criteria you've established.

CAUTION
Please remember that ALL time spent with the candidate is considered part of their interview. Even time such as taking the candidate to lunch or dinner and transporting the candidate to interviews or from the airport. Treat all interactions with the candidates as part of the interview process. Seemingly harmless small talk is where protected information is most likely to be revealed and once it is out there it's out there.

Speaking of Small Talk

Small talk is intended to be innocuous: "How was the traffic?" "Wow, that's some rain we've been having." Traffic, weather and sports are usually safe topics.

Small talk becomes problematic when it ventures into the topics to avoid “We have the same alma mater. When did you graduate?” “You have an interesting accent. Where did you grow up?” “I see that you’re limping. What happened?” “It looks like you’re expecting. How many kids do you have?” Even though small talk usually takes place outside of the formal interview process, the information is still being asked and shared nonetheless, so it carries the same risks as if these topics were questions in the actual interviews.

What if the candidate is freely sharing the information?

Even if you didn’t ask, the topics are still off-limits. If the candidate brings up a topic to avoid, redirect the conversation.

What if the candidate is asking about daycares and schools and churches and LGBTQ resources as part of their relocation decision?

If the candidate is asking questions, you may answer. However, to avoid this all together, a best practice recommend is to have a 3^{rd} party outside of the hiring process factored into the interview agenda as a liaison for everything personal (does not even have to be someone in the department nor even an employee- example, a realtor). Nothing in this meeting is shared with anyone else (though if there are potential concerns, the 3^{rd} party should contact Human Resources). The candidate gets the benefit of having someone to ask such questions (and is made aware of it in the interview agenda so they know this opportunity will exist at some point during the scheduled time), and USM benefits from not having personal information injected into the hiring process.

What if we are just trying to see if the person will fit in with us?

That’s the exact reason not to do it. That is how bias will creep in. That defeats the purpose of diversity. Speak to your HR Partner for more information.

Types of Questions

<u>Open-Ended</u>

- Allows candidate to open up and respond freely.
- Generally begins with “explain how,” “tell me about,” etc.
- Use open ended questions to
  - Collect Information
    - “Why did you choose Human Resources for a career?”
    - “How do you go about setting goals?”
  - Promote discussion and expand on ideas
    - “Tell me about …”
    - “What do you mean by …”
  - Personality insight
    - “Why do you consider yourself a good leader?”
    - “What has been your greatest accomplishment?”

<u>Closed</u>

- Allows interviewer to receive a specific response.
- “Yes” or “No” or limited response (such as “five years”)
- Generally begins with “have you,” “do you,” “how much,” etc.
- Use closed questions to
  - Gain clear understanding of remarks
    - “Were you ultimately responsible for…”
    - “How much time did you spend on that project?”
  - Substantiate understanding
    - “How much autonomy were you given by your manager?”
    - “Are you looking for a nightshift position?”

<u>Behavioral-Interviewing</u>

- Based on the premise that the best predictor of future performance is past performance.
- Questions are formulated based on the criteria established for the position (as defined by the interview evaluation)
- Use behavioral-interview questions to surmise experience, or lack of
    - Was the candidate able to give an example that demonstrates experience?
    - Did the candidate handle the described situation well?
    - Is their experience relatable to our environment?
    - Were they able to give multiple examples to reaffirm experience level?
- Traditional interview question: “What is your leadership style?”
  vs.
  Behavioral interview question: “Tell me about a time when you successfully coached an underperforming employee.”
- Requires the candidate to demonstrate their experience and decision making as opposed to telling you what they think is the right answer.

Sample Competencies with Example Questions

The following is a list of sample job-related criteria used to evaluate candidates along with a brief explanation of what the criteria is used to measure. In addition, example questions are provided to guide you in determining how to probe the criteria for effective evaluation. Keep in mind that you are not limited to the criteria or questions provided in this guide; these are for sample purposes only.

Experience & Education- Goal is to find if candidate's past has helped prepare them for the available position. Do they have the required education and experience?

- Describe the responsibilities of your former position?
- Tell me about your experience with…
- What was your specific role in the process?
- What sort of projects did you work on at school that helped prepare you for…?

Motivational Fit & Enthusiasm- Gauges how well the person 'fits' the job. Will they be happy and satisfied? Are they going to get what they are looking for out of this position? Is it going to help them reach their future goals? Are they going to be personally fulfilled in this position? Is the person excited about the job or are they just looking for "a" job? You can gauge also from the type of questions the candidate asks (if any asked at all).

- Why does this job interest you?
- What are you expecting to gain from this position?
- How do you feel about taking on these responsibilities?
- What are you looking for out of a job?
- What part of your work gives you the greatest feeling of satisfaction?
- What has been your favorite/worst job and why?
- What type of environment do you prefer to work in?
- What are your future career goals?

Attitude- Demonstrates that they can accept criticism and take accountability for actions. Do they try to rectify situations and are they generally positive and upbeat about work situations?

- Can you give an example of a time when you have received negative feedback about your job performance? How did you react?
- What frustrates you the most about your current position? Can you give an example of how you have dealt with this frustration in the past?
- When was the last time you made a big mistake? What did you do?
- Have you ever taken a substantial risk that has failed? What was it? What did you learn?
- Have you ever had an experience turning a problem into a success? Tell me about it.

Adaptability /Multi-Tasking- Assessing a person's ability to adapt to change and handle multiple different job duties at once. Are they "slow and steady" or do they have the ability to quickly change gears and not be overwhelmed by constant interruption and requests for help?

- Give me examples of how you've gone above and beyond in your current job?
- Sometimes we are asked to solve problems without the proper resources and tools. Do you have an example of when this has happened? What did you do?
- Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.
- How do you handle a challenge? Give me an example.

- Tell us about a situation in which you had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
- Describe one of the most difficult, challenging, demanding, or frustrating work experiences you have faced. Why was it so difficult? How did you handle the situation? What did you learn from the situation?

Communication Skills & Professionalism- In this assessment you are looking for the 3 main behaviors that affect patient satisfaction: communication, listening and respect. A lot of this is observable. Does the candidate communicate on a level appropriate for the job? Did the candidate make eye contact? Were their answers appropriate for the questions? Did they listen attentively or interrupt you? Do they have a demeanor of confidence? Do they understand what proper business behavior is?

- What do you do when you don't understand your supervisor's instructions?
- Tell me about a time when you struggled to communicate with someone.
- Tell me about a difficult patient you had to care for. What made them difficult? How did you respond? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a specific experience that illustrates your ability to influence another person verbally. Feel free to use an example that involved changing an attitude, selling a product/idea, or being persuasive.
- Sometimes we are misunderstood by other people. Has this ever happened to you? How did you respond, and what were the results? What did you do to prevent this from happening again?
- Give me an example of a time you had to explain a financial concept to a non-financial audience. What were the results?

Conflict Resolution- Assesses a person's ability to reason through multiple viewpoints. Do they listen for concerns from all sides? Do they work to improve situations or are they passive aggressive and blame others?

- Tell me about the last argument you had with a coworkers. What was it about?
- Describe a situation when someone put you in the middle of an ongoing argument. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a decision by your manager or other leaders. Why did you disagree? What did you do about it?

Consultation Skills – Goal is to find out how well the person can interact with various customers, handle tough situations, gain credibility and respect, and be influential.

- Tell me about a time you disagreed with a customer on how to resolve an issue. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Give an example when you persuaded management to do something they were first reluctant to do. What was the result?
- Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to a customer or a group? How did you do it? Did they "buy" it?
- How do you go about establishing rapport with a customer? What have you done to gain their confidence? Give an example.
- Have you ever had to introduce a policy change to your work group? How did you do it?
- Have you ever met resistance when implementing a new idea or policy to a work group? How did you deal with it? What happened?

Critical Thinking- Assesses if a person can see the bigger and smaller pictures to address problems. Are they able to transfer ideas from one problem to another? Have they learned from past successes and failures to improve performance?

- Describe an institutional goal- such as improving admissions- not easily applied to your office. What have you done to work toward this goal in your office's daily activities?
- Give me an example of a time when you developed or recognized new thinking or trends that were helpful to your organization.
- Tell me about a time you had to plan a complex project.

- Think of a problem you have addressed by focusing on the underlying process rather than on isolated events. Describe the approach you took.
- Tell me about one major obstacle you overcame in your last job. How did you deal with it?

Customer Service Orientation- In this assessment you are looking for a service attitude. Is the person eager to help and willing to go above and beyond? Can they diffuse negative situations? Will they relentlessly hunt down answers and solutions? Do they have a mature problem-solving attitude?

- Provide an example of a time in which you had to use your fact-finding skills to gain information for solving a problem
- Tell me about a time that you helped resolve a particularly difficult customer issue.
- Describe the most creative way you have solved a customer's problem
- Tell us about a recent success you had with an especially difficult employee/co-worker.
- Please describe a time when you were working with a customer (internal or external) and were not able to give them what was originally requested. How did you approach this customer? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you worked with a demanding customer. In what ways was this customer demanding and how did you go about working with this person. What was the outcome?

Decision Making/Judgment- Indicates ability to make appropriate decisions in a thoughtful way. Does the candidate have the ability to work in an environment of uncertainty and change? Do they take action to achieve goals and go beyond what is required? Can they demonstrate ability to exercise discretion and judgment in matters of sensitive or confidential nature?

- Tell us about a time you made a mistake. What did you do? How did you handle it?
- What was the toughest decision you had to make in your last position?
- Tell me about a decision you made that you later regretted.
- Tell me about a termination decision you did or didn't make. What would you do differently now?
- How do you handle last minute changes?
- Tell me about a major change in your previous position and how you dealt with it.
- Describe a project or idea you originated.
- What kind of changes did you make in your past positions?
- What personal standards have you set for yourself? How do you keep from falling short?
- What do you do when you disagree with a decision your manager has made?
- Have you ever missed a deadline? Why?
- Tell me about a time you didn't complete your work. What did you do about it?
- Have you ever been in a seemingly impossible position with resource constraints, such as lack of staff, time or budget to complete a project? How did you handle that?

Diversity Awareness- Goal is to assess their appreciation of diversity. Are they sensitive to the feelings of others? Do they make special efforts to demonstrate respect in terms of actions and words? Are they adaptable to customers and coworkers with different needs, values and opinions? Or do they express stereotypes or biases about people?

- Tell me about a time you had to adapt to work with a person from a different cultural background. What did you do and what were the results?
- Give me an example of a time when communication with a customer or coworkers was difficult. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation when you worked with a person whose personal beliefs were the opposite of yours. How did you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time when you were able to step into another person's shoes in order to discover their unique perspective.
- Have you ever had a time when you felt it was necessary to compromise your own immediate interest in order to fulfill another person's needs? Tell me about it.

Integrity- Assesses whether a person takes personal responsibility for their actions. Do they take personal pride in professionalism? Will they respect confidentiality of customers and peers?

- Tellme about a situation in which you were called upon to keep a promise or confidence.
- Give me an example of a time when you chose to speak up for others when they were not present.
- When was the last time you "broke the rules"? Why did you do so?
- Tell me about a time when you asked forgiveness for doing something wrong?
- Share an example of a problem created for you by someone else. How did you handle it? What were the results?
- Have you ever had no control over circumstances, yet were responsible for the final outcome? What did you do? What were the results?

Leadership- Goal is to find out if the person demonstrates the ability to motivate the team and make good decisions. Are they someone who acts as a role model and leads by example? Are they someone who understands the role of a leader? Are they proactive problem solvers and seek feedback?

- What have you done to improve your leadership skills over the last year?
- What personal standards do you hold yourself to as a leader?
- Tell me about a time when you were successfully able to turn a failing employee around.
- If you took your manager's position tomorrow, how would you improve the department?
- Tell me about a tough employee relations situation you've had to deal with.
- What has been your experience in dealing with poor performing employees? Give me an example.
- Describe how you have involved staff in performance improvement initiatives and other decisions pertinent to their work.
- How do you make constructive feedback motivational?
- What was the toughest business decision you ever had to make?
- Have you ever had to implement an unpopular decision? What steps did you take? What was the outcome?
- Why have you chosen to be in management?

Mentorship- Goal is to determine if they work collaboratively with peers and share knowledge.

- Give me an example of a time when you came up with a clever way to motive your colleagues.
- Tell me about a time when you acknowledged or celebrated the success of yourself or others.
- Have you ever been a mentor? Describe a situation when you worked with someone to successfully improve their performance.

Process Improvement- Assesses whether they apply a systematic, logical and reasonable approach to analyzing situations. Are they confident assuming authority? Can they function comfortably without a structured agenda? Are they motivated to address problems?

- Have you ever made suggestions for improving your work process? Describe what you did and how you achieved results.
- Tell me about a time when your supervisor presented you with a new process for doing something and gave you the task of implementing and evaluating that process. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you were faced with a situation where there was no clear policy or procedure to follow. What did you do? What were the results?
- Have there been any large changes within your current organization? Tellme about one change that affected your job. How did you react?
- Tell me about a problem that you identified and resolved by using a systematic approach.

Project Management- Assessing a person's experience and ability to manage projects.

- Describe a project you have recently managed? What role did you play? What were you trying to accomplish? What barriers did you encounter? What was the end result?
- How do you ensure a project stays on track? What tools do you use to plan your activities?
- In your experience, what are important skills for a project manager to be successful?

- Tell me how you schedule projects and establish timelines.

Results-Orientation- In this assessment, you are identifying if the person is capable of seeing the big picture and how all the pieces and parts contribute to the end goal. Are they able to identify when something doesn't make sense and needs to be changed or are they solely process focused? Do they have initiative to get things done?

- Describe a project or idea that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?
- What impact did you have in your last job?
- What projects have you started on your own recently? What prompted you to get started?
- Give some instances in which you anticipated problems and were able to influence a new direction.
- Being innovative sometimes means getting away from the same old way of thinking. Tell me about a time when you were able to break away from the traditional way of thinking to come up with new ideas.
- Give me examples of how you've gone above and beyond in your current job?

Teamwork- Goal is to determine if they are successful being a part of a team. Can they distinguish between own efforts and contributes made by others? Are they acknowledging and proud of team efforts? Can they maintain a positive attitude through disagreements and resolve conflicts appropriately? Will they follow through on explicit/implicit promises and commitments?

- Describe a situation in which you accomplished something as a member of a team. What was the team's purpose? What was your role?
- Describe a time when you were able to help a coworkers solve a problem or improve their performance?
- What is the main strength or "natural style" that you bring to a team? Describe a specific situation and how your work style affected the team's decision.
- Give me an example of a time when you confronted a negative attitude successfully, with the result of building teamwork and morale.
- Give me an example of an occasion when you have done something for others in the organization without being asked or told to do so.

Job Auditions

A job audition is when you require, as part of the interview process, the candidate to perform some job-related activity to demonstrate their competence. Examples include:

- Conducting a presentation (could be used to assess presentation skills and/or subject matter expertise).
- Sharing examples of past work products (examples might be an advertising campaign or fundraiser they worked on, something they've written such as a policy or program or article, or a training class they developed.)
- In-basket exercises (During the test, the applicant is given mail, telephone messages, documents and memos that they have a limited period of time to set priorities, organize their working schedule accordingly and respond to mail and phone calls.)
- Demonstrating ability to utilize computer systems, such as creating a spreadsheet
- A writing sample

If the person needs to prepare for the job audition in advance, this information should be included as part of the Interview Notification. Give specifics as to what is expected, time and length, as well as any resource considerations (such as file types for presentations or equipment that will be made available).

For example:

> Please be prepared to give a brief presentation (10 minutes) on the topic of Diversity- your philosophy and recommended approach. The format and overall content for this presentation is what you would like for it to be – no content requirements. You may e-mail your PowerPoint (if applicable) in advance to mgellar@usm.edu so we will have it ready and available for you at the time of your interview. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to Monica Geller at 601-266-5000.

Other examples of job auditions include:

- Applicants for an administrative assistant position are asked to edit a piece of written correspondence, complete a purchase requisition and/or fill out a travel voucher.
- Applicants for positions in public relations, communications or marketing may be asked to write a press release responding to a reporter's written questions and/or provide feedback on a draft brochure intended for the general public.

If a job audition is included in the process, it should align with the criteria established for the job. For instance, an administrative assistant applicant's performance on a Microsoft Excel task should be used to rate the established criteria of experience or their performance on an in-basket exercise should be used to rate the established criteria of organization skills.

If using a job audition as part of your process, it is recommended that you consult with Human Resources.

Evaluating Candidates

Interview evaluations should be completed immediately following the interview while your memory is still fresh. Keeping track of candidates may be difficult, and relying on memory is risky and inefficient. Using an Interview Evaluation not only gives you the opportunity to record information about the candidates but also ensures that you evaluate each candidate using the same job-related criteria. A structured evaluation form used for all applicants also helps eliminate interview bias.

When completing an evaluation:

Identify useful information
Record information related to each criteria. The best information is "evidence statements," which are precise sentences or phrases used by the applicant.

Evidence is clear if…

It is specific and factual
It makes sense
It enables understanding of the situation, opinion or thought being conveyed

Evidence is relevant if…

It pertains to one or more of the established criteria identified in the posted job description

Evidence is adequate if…

You have obtained enough evidence for each job-related criteria to make a hiring decision.

Assess applicants
Rate applicants against the established criteria.

A simple rating scale might be (optional):

Exceeds Criteria (E): Evidence shows that the applicant's skills and competencies go beyond what is required to do the job.

Meets Criteria (M): Evidence suggests that the applicant will be able to perform at an acceptable level with respect to the established criteria.

Does Not Meet Criteria (D): Evidence suggests that the applicant would not be able to perform at an acceptable level with respect to the established criteria.

Stick to Established Criteria when Evaluating Candidates

Use care in noting your impressions of the candidates on evaluations. For instance, comments such as "accent is too thick" or "not sure they could meet the physical demands of the job" are veering into protected categories that could be construed as discriminatory. Utilize the Questions and Topics to Avoid as your guide for what aspects are to be avoided, and stick to evaluating established criteria to ensure all assessments are job related. When in doubt, get help from your HR Partner.

Sample Interview Evaluation

______________________________ Candidate Name

______________________________________ Position

______________________________ Interviewer

______________________________________ Date

Each participant in the interview should complete an evaluation

Rating scale can be changed

Criteria	**Rating** **Does not meet– Partially Meets- Meets – Exceeds- Highly exceeds**					Not Rated
Experience/Education	◻ 1	◻ 2	◻ 3	◻ 4	◻ 5	◻ NR
Communication Skills	◻ 1	◻ 2	◻ 3	◻ 4	◻ 5	◻ NR
Organization	◻ 1	◻ 2	◻ 3	◻ 4	◻ 5	◻ NR
Interpersonal Skills	◻ 1	◻ 2	◻ 3	◻ 4	◻ 5	◻ NR
Conflict Management	◻ 1	◻ 2	◻ 3	◻ 4	◻ 5	◻ NR

Criteria should be established from the qualifications and KSAs of the job description and posting. At this stage the candidate has already been deemed "minimally qualified" so more focus should be given to required competencies.

MAJOR STRENGTHS

The positives the candidate has going for them.

AREAS OF CONCERN

List any negatives in regards to the criteria. For example, "the candidate struggled finding examples to support their statements" or "lacks experience in…"

There is no recommend or total scoring on this evaluation;
Intended for documentation of the interview and feedback purposes for the Hiring Manager only.

Click here for an Interview Evaluation form

Making the Selection

Congratulations! You have completed the screening, interviewing and evaluation process and are ready to make a selection.

1. Collect interview evaluations from all parties who participated in the interview process. Discuss and/or clarify any issues or concerns resulting from the evaluations before finalizing your decision.

2. Compare and contrast your candidate feedback to the established criteria. Who is the best candidate? Why? Is your decision fully job-related? If you have concerns, get help from your HR Partner.

3. Determine if more information is needed. For instance, you may wish to bring your top candidate(s) back for a follow-up interview if there are still lingering questions or doubts.

4. If it wasn't part of the interview process, consider bringing the top candidate(s) in to meet the team and view the work environment prior to making an offer.

5. Record your decision on the Selection Document form.

6. Create a file- either electronic or paper- to store all of the forms and documentation used as part of the process and keep on file for a minimum of 3 years. This documentation will be used to support the hiring decision should it later be challenged, such as through a discrimination claim. You only want to keep the official documentation, such as screening matrix, interview evaluations, reference checks and selection documentation. Handwritten notes from the interview, for instance, can be discarded as the relevant information is provided on the interview evaluation.

7. While the applicant tracking system will automatically send notifications to the candidates who were not selected once their status is changed to "Not Hired", consider reaching out directly to those you interviewed to notify them they were not selected. Doing so is not only respectful but also maintains the relationship in the event of future opportunities.

Note: Unlike our former Applicant Tracking System that did not send notifications to candidates until the position was closed, the current ATS sends notifications at any point in the process as soon as the applicant's status is changed to "Not Hired." Notifying candidates in a timely manner that they are no longer in consideration is respectful and considerate. Do not leave people hanging.

Sample Selection Documentation Form

General Information			
Job Title:		**Department:**	
Hiring Manager:		**Date of Posting:**	
Requisition Number:			
Scope of Candidates:	□ USM Internal	□ Department Internal	□ External

□ Search Committee Members	□ Interview Committee Members	□ No Committee
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
Committee Chair:		

Results of On-site Interviews

Candidate(s) Hired:	Reason(s)

Candidate(s) Not Hired:	Reason(s)

Additional Notes:

Prepared by: **Date:**

Click here for a Selection Document form

The Hiring Process

Offer extended by HM

Candidate Declines- Consult with committee/HR on other candidates, update ATS

Candidate Accepts- HM creates offer letter using template in ATS, notifies HR, and updates status in ATS to "background check"

HM sends Offer Letter, attaching Benefits Highlights; HM sends request for education verification (if applicable) through ATS; Routes PAF for approval

ATS Steps – Offer Letter to Background Check & New Hire Checklist

Candidate Responsibilities: Initiate Background check, complete onboarding forms in ATS & Paper versions on HR website (including I-9)

Background clearance obtained; HM confirms candidate tasks have been met & start date with candidate and HR

HR will notify HM and candidate if clearance not obtained; HM updates status to "Not Hired" in ATS

If clearance obtained, candidate should complete the I-9 no later than 1st day of hire

HM gives final disposition to all remaining Not Hired candidates then moves selected Candidate to Hired

Consult Onboarding Checklist

W# is not generated for new employee until HM and Candidate complete all Hiring Processes

- **HM extends offer to candidate and sets tentative start date.**
  - HM responsible for following budgetary and compensation guidelines when making offers.
  - If candidate declines offer; HM will update status in ATS and determine next steps with the Search Committee and HR Partner.
  - If candidate accepts offer; HM will create offer letter and new hire PAF then advise HR Partner.
- **After offer is accepted candidate should be moved to Background Check status.**
  - Changing the status in the ATS notifies HR to begin the Background check and the Candidate receives a Welcome Email notification with instructions to complete the onboarding process.
  - Information should be provided to the candidate that completing all onboarding tasks including the I-9 form is required and instructions and a list of acceptable documents can be found in the new employee forms. (CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

- **HR will notify the department once background clearance has been obtained.** Upon clearance, HM should reach out to the new hire, confirm that all onboarding tasks have been completed and the start date and answer any questions they may have about starting work and then confirm the official start date with HR.
- **HM should make final adjustments to requisition in ATS by providing a final disposition on all not selected candidates and then marking selected candidate as hired.**
  - Candidate must complete I-9 no later than 1st day of hire including providing acceptable documentation for completion of Section 2.Employee ID generated by HR after New Hire Paperwork has been processed.
- **In order for HR to generate w# the following items are required:**
  - Candidate: Offer Accepted, Background Check Cleared, Degree Verification complete, ATS Onboarding Form complete, New Hire Paperwork Complete (includes I-9)
  - HM: PAF, Applicant moved to Hired Status in ATS and confirmed start date

Offer Letter

USM policy requires all candidates who receive a job offer at USM be given a written offer letter. We recommend that the offer be first extended to the candidate in a live format (phone or video meeting) allowing for discussion and negotiation. Following the verbal offer, the written offer should be sent through the ATS for all Staff and Adjunct positions. Templates for offer letters are added to each requisition by your HR Business Partner based on the position details and can be accessed once the candidate is put into Offer Status. While edits may be made to the template, the information within the template should not be changed and you should include Human Resources as an approver if you add significant content or make material changes. For full-time faculty offer letters, please utilize the Faculty Hiring Toolkit and offer letter template outside of the ATS (part-time, adjunct offer letters are provided in the ATS).

In addition to the offer letter, you are encouraged to attach a copy of the **Benefits Highlights**. A **welcome letter** has been designed in the ATS to provide instructions for the new hire processing: where to find forms, where to submit them, how to complete the background check, etc. This will be sent to the candidate automatically after you submit them to Background Check status in the ATS. These onboarding/prehire steps are important to emphasize to the candidates as their employment may be delayed or even revoked if they do not complete the process timely or correctly. Templates for Welcome Letters are available on the HR website for use in special circumstances where we hire an individual outside of the ATS (students/GA's). The Benefits Highlights is a short summary of the benefits offered at USM. This would be an appropriate document to send to any benefit-eligible applicant during the interview process or at the time of hire. That document is also available on the USM website.

If you are planning to offer **relocation**, you must include that information in the offer letter. The department must have available funds to support the relocation, and then discretion should be used for whether the position warrants use of such funds. For instance, if local candidates are qualified and available, it would not be fiscally responsible to select a candidate requiring relocation. It is also recommended that you specify whether relocation is available or not in the special instructions of your job posting so that candidates know that information up front prior to applying. For complete information on relocation- such as eligibility, expense limitations, timing, and processes- refer to the "New Employee Moving Policy" (ADMA-PUR-004) on the Department of Procurement and Contract Services website. Please note that the expenses under the section "Expenses reimbursed under this policy" are the reasonable and customary expenses USM considers to be reimbursable. Even so, we recommend that you put a dollar amount cap on the allowable expenses (up to and no more than $x). Expenses listed in the section "Expenses not reimbursed under this policy unless referenced in the offer letter" should be reserved for special circumstances and not typically part of the standard relocation package. The policy requires that these allowances be specifically outlined in the offer letter, and, again, we recommend a dollar amount cap be expressly stated in the offer letter. Offer letter template language for relocation is available from your HR Partner.

The candidate should accept the offer letter in the ATS system using an electronic signature. Detailed instructions on how to generate and send the offer letter in the ATS are included in the ATS Hiring Manager Guide.

Dispositioning Candidates

The Final Disposition of Not Hired can be assigned at any stage of the recruiting and selection process. The disposition you assign should be selected with care, as it is used to support your hiring decision if ever challenged.

For example: Do not select "*more qualified candidate selected*" if the candidate did not meet minimum qualifications because that means they did not warrant any consideration at all. The disposition reason "*did not meet minimum qualifications*" should be selected in the instance.

"*Does not meet minimum qualification*" also shouldn't be selected if the candidate didn't meet the preferred qualifications. This reason should only be selected if the candidate does not meet the minimum qualifications that are required for the position.

The Hiring Team is responsible for giving all candidates a final disposition at the point in time when you are no longer going to consider them as candidates. **Candidates will receive an automatic email from Cornerstone when moved to the "Not Hired" Status thanking them for their application.** Once your selected candidate has accepted the offer and cleared the background check, all remaining candidates should be set to "Not Hired" status. Then you can move the selected individual to "Hired" which should close your requisition if the number of openings have been fulfilled.

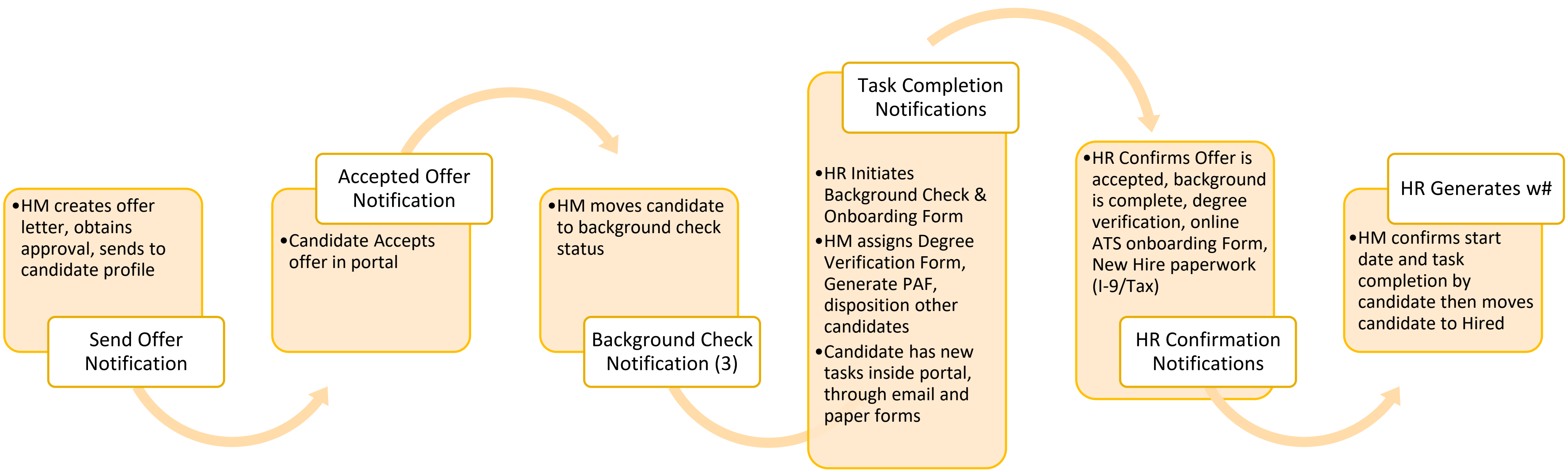
Disposition Reason	Definition
Voluntary Withdrawal	Automatically assigned when an applicant withdraws their application through the candidate portal.
Closed as Duplicate	Used only when an applicant applies for the same position more than one time.
Not Eligible for Rehire	Used only if you have direct knowledge and/or have been in communication with HR.
Application Withdrawn	When the applicant tells you, they no longer wish to be considered for your open position.
Applied after offer was extended	Must be verifiable based on offer and submission dates.
Candidate accepted another job	Specific reason for application withdrawn.
Candidate not in screened applicant pool	When you have not reviewed a candidate's material and should be based on a specific criteria that you can provide if called upon. For example: large applicant pools reviewed 20 applicants at a time based on application submission dates in determining a narrow interview pool.
Does not meet minimum qualifications	When the candidate does not meet the minimum qualifications as posted in the job ad which are from your approved job description
Failed Pre-Screening	Automatically assigned through Cornerstone system when a candidate selects an incorrect answer to one of the prescreening questions. This can also be used in cases where your job has approved prescreening assessments.

Failed to show for interview	When candidate did not attend/show up for a scheduled interview
Incomplete Application	When you requested specific information in your job ad that was not supplied by a candidate when they applied for the position.
More qualified candidate selected	When a candidate meets the minimum qualifications and none of the other dispositions apply.
Offer rejected by candidate	When either a verbal or written offer is rejected by the candidate
Position is cancelled or not filled	If no hire will be made within the requisition
Unable to contact	When a candidate does not respond to phone or electronic communication attempts

New Hire Processes

Timely completion of the new hire process takes effort from the Hiring Manager (responsible for the PAF and Management of the Requisition in Cornerstone), the selected candidate (tax paperwork, background check, Cornerstone Onboarding Forms and the I-9) and the HR Team (ensuring compliance with new hire requirements and creating the EmplID). **It is important that each person completes their responsibilities in the process so that we are properly prepared for the new hire's first day of employment. A smooth new hire and onboading process is the beginning of a mutually beneficial employment relationship.**

In order to shorten the time to hire many of these processes are running concurrently and all start with proper dispositioning within the ATS. Each of the candidate statuses triggers notification emails to each responsible party for tasks necessary to keep the process moving. For example: when the candidate is put into Offer Status an email notification is sent to the Hiring Team directing them to resources for generating the offer letter as well as when to disposition the candidate. Once the offer is sent to the candidate via the Candidate Profile an email notification is sent to the candidate to log in and accept the offer. Notifications are sent for tasks as well as status reminders. The process flow diagram below provides an overview and a Checklist has been created to further assist in the tracking of this process.



The requirements for hiring each different type of employee (staff, student, faculty or graduate assistant) are outlined in the step by step process guides for the hiring team's reference. If you have any questions about the requirements to hire a specific individual, please reach out to your HR Partner.

New Hire Name

NEW HIRE PROCESS CHECKLIST

Owner	Activity	Completion Date
Hiring Manager	**Generate Offer Letter:** Generate letter in ATS for all Staff and Adjunct positions. Obtain unit determined approvals for offer letter. Send Offer Letter to Candidate Portal to trigger Candidate Task. (Reference ATS Steps – Offer Letter to Background Check for help in Cornerstone)	
Candidate	**Accept Offer Letter:** Done by logging into candidate portal.	
Hiring Manager	**Move to Background Check & Assign Forms:** Once the candidate has accepted the offer, move them to Background Check status (continue updating dispositions of other candidates as appropriate) and assign the Degree Verification Form if required in your minimum qualifications.	
Human Resources	**Assigns Background Check & ATS Online Onboarding Form to candidate**	
Hiring Manager	**Generate PAF:** Complete the PAF now and begin routing for approvals, include offer letter if unit requires.	
Candidate	**Begin Onboarding Tasks:** Initiate background check; Submit Degree Verification; Complete ATS online onboarding form; Complete Applicable New Hire Paperwork - Tax, Direct Deposit & I-9 Forms	
Human Resources	**Gathers & Checks Off Requirements:** HR will notify HM when background check is complete if additional items are still outstanding from the applicant or the HM	
Hiring Manager	**Close the Hiring Loop:** Once HR has confirmed background check follow up with candidate if onboarding tasks are outstanding. New Hire cannot start until all tasks are complete. Confirm Start Date, close out any remaining candidates in requisition, move candidate to Hired status.	
Human Resources	**Generates W#:** Communicates information about benefit review (if applicable)	

Onboarding

Be sure to utilize the Department Onboarding Checklist to ensure you appropriately prepare for your new hire's arrival and provide them with the information and training they need to be successful. Give them a great start at USM!