



Idaho State
University

Search Committee Best Practices

Training Search Committees and Search Committee Chairs

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Denise Scott
HR Business Partner for Talent Acquisition

ROAR



Role of the Search Committee Chair

- **Leadership & Coordination:**

- Leads the search process, ensuring that all committee members are aligned and meeting timelines.
- Schedule interviews with approved candidates.
- Notify interviewed candidates when they are no longer being considered for the position in coordination with HR.

- **Managing the evaluation process:** works with hiring manager to develop the matrix, oversee applicant review and scoring. Communicate with HR to advance through search process.

- **Facilitating Discussions:** Guides committee discussions to ensure they are objective, structured, and based on established merit-based criteria. Actively encourages fair and impartial decision-making throughout the process.

- **Recommendation:** Synthesizes committee feedback and presents recommended candidates to hiring manager for consideration, based on collective input.



Staying organized as Search Committee Chair

- Develop and maintain a clear timeline for search
- Keep committee on schedule and moving forward with clear communication to all members
- Proactively schedule calendar holds for certain weeks/times for various phases (kickoff meeting, discussion meeting(s), interviews, reference checks, etc.)
- Minimize delays between phases through proactive planning
- Maintain frequent communication with HR and committee members
- Ensure matrix meets all requirements including a tab for each committee member and a summary tab
- Guide fair, consistent candidate evaluation
- Facilitate thoughtful discussion and consensus building within the committee
- Make timely decisions as needed to move the process forward
- Ensures adherence to institutional hiring policies and procedures



The role of the Search Committee

- **Expectations**: All members of the Search Committee are expected to uphold ethical and professional obligations.
- **An impartial and objective hiring process**: The range of perspectives within the committee ensures that all candidates are evaluated objectively based on their qualifications and potential fit for the role, in a manner that upholds a fair and impartial selection process based on candidate merit.
- **Shared responsibility**: Search committees allow for a more thoughtful and balanced approach. It is important to note that the search committee process (involving decision making, multiple people, gaining various perspectives and feedback, acknowledging that committee members are not decision-makers, etc.) is inherently designed to support an objective and competitive search process.
- **Increased transparency**: Search committees can help ensure transparency in the recruitment process, providing documentation and feedback from HR at every step. This helps to maintain accountability and ensures that the process aligns with the university goals and values.
- **Broader Reach**: Search committees can often better identify qualified candidates by leveraging the collective networks and experience of its members. This can result in a wider pool of applicants, ensuring a more comprehensive and representative selection process.
- **Improved candidate experience**: Candidates often have a more positive experience when they interact with multiple members of a search committee, as it shows that the university values different viewpoints and has a thorough process for evaluating talent.



The Part You Play in a Search Committee

- **Confidentiality** is key throughout the search process. Search Committee members are required to keep all aspects of the search process confidential, including how many applicants have applied for the position, the identity of candidates, deliberations of committee members, candidate scoring and ranking based on the matrix or interviews, and all Search Committee discussions. Search Committee members should feel free to discuss candidates amongst the group, however, should not have any type of discussion with anyone outside of the Search Committee members. Best practice is individual Search Committee members should not meet/discuss/coordinate outside of committee meetings.
- **Impartiality:** It is imperative that Search Committee members remain impartial and allow the search to proceed through the final stages and hiring.
 - Any action that you take or statements you make publicly as a member of the Search Committee are highly scrutinized and can create perceptions that favoritism or unfairness exists within the search process.
 - The primary goal of Search Committee members is to evaluate and recommend qualified candidates for 1st and 2nd round interviews and provide candidate strengths/weaknesses to hiring managers for final decision. The hiring manager, not the search committee, makes the final decision to offer a position.
- **Record Retention:** Once a search is finalized and closed, Search Committee members should shred/delete their personal notes relating to the search. HR maintains Search Committee files for 5 years and this is considered the official record.



Candidate Evaluation Matrix

•**Objective Assessment:** A standardized tool used to objectively rate candidates based on specific job-related criteria.

•**Clear Criteria:** based on the minimum and preferred qualifications outlined in the job posting.

•**Rating Scale:** Consistent rating scale to score on each criterion, promoting fair comparison across all applicants.

•**HR Approval:** The evaluation matrix must be approved by HR before rating applicants.

•Each applicant that applies by the priority date should appear on the matrix

•Y/N or numeric format

•If applicant does not meet MQs, they should receive a score of zero or be clearly marked as such on the matrix

•Minimum qualifications should outweigh preferred qualifications

•Key responsibilities are not required on the matrix

•Each committee member should have a tab on the spreadsheet. The spreadsheet should also have a summary tab that calculates the total scores for easy viewing of all applicants scores

•The summary tab should clearly show who is being considered for 1st round interviews

•If applicants do not submit all application materials – a decision should be made whether to score the materials that were submitted or to eliminate them; as long as applicants are treated consistently, we can reach out to ask for missing documents. Consult HR if needed.



Preparing your Matrix

Use your Minimum and Preferred Qualifications

APPLICANT SCORING MATRIX

****In order for the Summary Totals and Rank to work correctly, each committee member must put applicants in the same order (suggested date of application)****

A rating of 1 signifies that the applicant has no experience and/or skills in a particular area															
A rating of 2 signifies that the applicant has very little experience and/or very few skills in a particular area															
A rating of 3 signifies that the applicant has average experience and/or skills in a particular area.															
A rating of 4 signifies that the applicant has above average experience and/or skills in a particular area.															
A rating of 5 signifies that the applicant has extensive experience and/or skills in a particular area.															
Minimum Qualifications							Preferred Qualifications								
Bachelor's degree OR six years combined education, training and experience	5 years professional work experience in its administration support and analysis	At least 1 year experience overseeing and managing service-driven teams to achieve project outcomes	Experience with project management related to IT systems (prefer HR/Payroll)	Experience effectively communicating and responding to customer and stakeholder groups at all organizational levels	Demonstrated technical expertise with report writing systems/tools	Prior professional experience in Higher Education	Familiarity with Banner or similar ERP systems and recruitment software	Familiarity with SQL related to reporting systems	Prior experience working with vendors to ensure effective definition of and delivery of service functions	Total	Notes - if candidate does not meet a minimum list which qualification they do not meet; any o notes, especially why or why not you want to mo interview				
YES/NO	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-3	1-3	1-3	1-3						

- All minimum and preferred qualifications should be included on the matrix
- Create a tab similar to the above example for each Search Committee member
- Create a summary tab that sums or averages each Search Committee member applicant scores
- Each applicant that applied by the priority date needs to be scored on the matrix
- The summary tab should clearly indicate who you would like to invite for 1st round interviews for HR review



Navigating through Conflict of Interest

- **Recognizing conflicts:** Identify situations where personal interests may improperly influence decision making.
- **Disclosure Requirement:** If any Search Committee member has a personal interest, including familial relationship with an applicant or feels unable to review any applicant impartially due to professional or personal connections, they must disclose this to the committee chair or HR.
 - **Maintaining Objectivity:** If a Search Committee member can remain objective and review the application materials in a objective and impartial way, they may (at the discretion of the university) remain on the committee after disclosing the relationship.
 - The Search Committee member could score all other applicants and abstain from scoring the person to whom they have the connection.
 - **Recusal When Necessary:** However, if the Search Committee member wants to mitigate any perception of conflict, they should recuse themselves from the Search Committee.
- **Enhance Objectivity:** We enhance objectivity and minimize internal influence by recognizing it and discussing each candidate with all search committee members to gain a broader perspective.
- **HR Oversight:** HR, in consultation with Legal, plays a critical role in ensuring that conflicts of interest are managed and that the hiring process remains fair and unbiased.



Additional Conflicts of Interest

•Hiring Authority:

- Serving as both the hiring authority and a member of the Search Committee. This practice is acceptable as long as the hiring authority allows the committee to function as intended.
- Hiring authority (or others) improperly steering toward or from a particular candidate in an unprofessional or biased manner or based on protected class characteristics, please contact HR.

•Serving as a committee member and a reference for an applicant:

- Generally should not be allowed. Please ask the applicant to find another reference or recuse yourself from the committee.

If you feel the Search Committee/Chair of the committee/Hiring Manager are not functioning as intended, please reach out to HR or Office of Equal Opportunity.



International Applicants

In light of the recent proclamation and its significant fiscal implications, effective September 21, 2025 on a temporary basis, no positions at Idaho State University are eligible for new petitions for visa sponsorships. This is not a permanent university policy decision but rather interim guidance until Idaho State University gains further clarity on evolving federal immigration policy.

HR Department Hiring Updates:

Effective immediately, the HR Department has updated all job announcements to include this tag: **This position is not eligible for new visa sponsorship at this time. Candidates who already hold valid U.S. work authorization may be considered.** This statement will be included on all current and future job announcements until further notice. Additionally, job application templates will be updated to include that statement along with a screening question to ascertain if applicants will require sponsorship for their respective position of interest.

Search Committee Guidance:

Search committees should **NOT** ask any job applicants about their work authorization or visa status. The HR Department will pre-screen applicant pools for candidates who have affirmed they do not require visa sponsorship in a pre-screening question. The search committee's role remains to assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities of job applicants, and they should not make any judgments or assumptions about work eligibility. If potential applicants inquire about possible sponsorship opportunities, all hiring authorities are asked to consistently state that this position is not eligible for new visa sponsorship at this time. Candidates who already hold valid U.S. work authorization may be considered.



Zoom Interview Best Practices

1st round interviews: typically conducted via zoom – prior to scheduling interviews, make sure that HR has approved the applicant matrix and interviewee list.

Prepare your technology: Test your connection, microphone, and camera before the interview.

Set Expectations:

- Inform the applicant about the format and duration of the interview. Encourage all committee members and the applicant to use video to create a more engaging, personal experience.
- Look at the camera to simulate eye contact, rather than the screen.
- Engage actively by nodding and using facial expressions.
- Be mindful of body language – it may be harder to interpret over video.
- Limit distractions.
- Ensure clear communication, speak slowly, especially if there is a lag in the connection.
- Ask the applicant if they can hear and see you well, adjust as needed.

Prepare interview questions:

- Develop a list of structured questions based on the job requirements.
- Ask all applicants the same core set of questions to ensure fair evaluation.
- Clarifying questions may be needed based upon the response and may be different.
- HR can review the interview questions prior to the committee conducting the interview.
- Stay on topic and keep the interview focused on the candidates qualifications and the job.

Document Feedback:

- List strength and weaknesses for each applicant.
- Take notes during the interview to help evaluate applicants later.
- Document your impressions and assessment.
- Chair of the committee will collaborate with HR to move to next steps.



Reference Checks

- Employment references should be checked prior to inviting individuals to campus for in-person interviews.
- Prior to contacting references, disclose to the candidate that the search committee will be contacting references.
- Consistency and fairness are important.
- Reference questions must be clearly job related and directly relevant to a candidate's potential success in the position.
- The search committee or hiring authority should take care to gathering the same body of information for each candidate.
- If candidate is an ISU or State of Idaho employee, contact HR for previous performance evaluation information.



On Campus Interview Best Practices

•**2nd round interviews:** typically conducted on campus – prior to scheduling interviews make sure that HR has given approval.

•**Create an agenda with a clear schedule & expectations:**

- Share the agenda with the candidate ahead of time.
- Give prompts for presentations ahead of time.
- Both the Search Committee and Hiring Manager should conduct an interview.
- Include key team members and constituents in the interview process.
- Allow time for the candidate to ask questions.

•**Create a welcoming atmosphere:** Greet the candidate warmly upon arrival.

•**Follow structured interview questions:**

- Use a standard set of questions for all candidates to ensure fairness.
- Focus on skills, experience, and behaviors relevant to the position.

•**Evaluate Objectively:**

- Ask for input from those that interacted with the candidate.
- Document impressions and assessments.
- Hiring Manager will make the final decision on who to hire, informed by the search process and interview feedback.

•**End on a positive note:** thank the candidate for their time and clarify next steps and timeline for follow-up.



Behavior Focused Interviewing

•Focus on past experiences:

- Ask candidates to describe specific situations they've encountered in previous roles.
- Example: "Tell me about a time..."
- Probe for details: follow up with questions that encourage the candidate to elaborate on their responses.
- Example: "What was your specific role in that project..."

•Listen for behavioral indicators:

- Look for indicators of competencies through the candidate's behavior, problem-solving approach, and decision making process.
- Pay attention to how candidates describe their role in past situations.
- Example: "Describe a time..."

•Evaluate Consistency:

- Cross-check responses for consistency across different questions
- Example: "You mentioned earlier that you..."

•Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior.

•Difference between traditional and behavioral interview questions.

•Promote fairness and subjectivity in interviews.

•Helps assess job-specific competencies and soft skills.

•Follow-up questions are important to probe deeper into responses to get more detailed examples.

[Further Information - Behavioral Interview Questions](#)



Illegal Interview Questions: Avoid Questions on the Following Topics

- Family Information
- National Origin
- Religion
- Gender, Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity
- Age
- Race or Ethnicity
- Family and Pregnancy
- Diversity or Diversity Statements
- Disability
 - Employers, including members of the Search Committee, are legally prohibited from asking candidates any questions related to disability.
 - If a candidate asks for an accommodation for an interview or during any phase of the search process, please refer them to HR for guidance.
 - If a candidate discloses a disability during an interview, please do not ask any follow-up questions, make a note of it and alert HR.



Legal Background

State and Federal laws provides protection of job applicants from discrimination based on their membership in one or more protected categories.

Employers cannot discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 or older), mental or physical disability, veteran status, ethnicity, pregnancy, marital status or genetic information, meaning they must consider all applicants equally regardless of these protected characteristics and make hiring decisions solely based on job qualifications.



Civil Rights Requirements

- **Title VII of the Civil Acts of 1964** prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin.
- **The Equal Pay Act of 1963** requires that men and women in the same workplace be given equal pay for equal work. The jobs need not be identical, but must be substantially equal. Job content (not job titles) determines whether jobs are substantially equal.
- **The Rehabilitation Act of 1973**, Sections 501 and 503. Section 501 prohibits employment discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the federal sector. Section 503 prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against individuals with disabilities and requires employers take steps to recruit, hire, promote, and retain these individuals.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended** (ADAAA) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications and access to state and local government programs and services. As it relates to employment, Title I of the ADA protects the rights of both employees and job seekers.



Civil Rights Requirements continued

- **Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978** (PDA) amends the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit sex discrimination on the basis of pregnancy.
- **Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1976** (ADEA) prohibits age discrimination against people who are age 40 and older.
- **Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974** (VEVRAA) prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against protected veterans and requires employers take steps to recruit, hire, promote, and retain these individuals.



Challenging Questions from Candidates

Questions about salary and benefits

- If the salary range was advertised on the job announcement, you can confirm the salary range.
- Let them know that the Hiring Manager will be able to discuss specifics.
- HR is available to meet with candidates to discuss benefits.

Questions about Respectful Workplace

- Highlight ISU's commitment to fostering a collaborative and respectful workplace for all individuals
- As part of the ISU Strategic Plan, ISU has certain values that we strive to uphold. Inclusivity is one of those values.
- ISU follows all federal and state laws.

Questions about ISU culture

- List of resources available to faculty and staff.
- Overview of ISU efforts, policies, initiatives.

Questions about Job Stability

- Provide insight into future goals and strategic initiatives, and how the role contributes to the overall success.

Questions about Career Growth and Development

- Highlight available growth opportunities, training programs, any department opportunities that may be available.

Questions about the Recruitment Process

- Clearly outline the next steps in the process, including anticipated timeline of when a decision will be made.
- If a candidate that was not selected for a position asks for feedback, a generalized statement is best, reach out to HR with any specific questions.

It's okay to tell candidates that you may not be the best person to answer a particular question and that you will find out who they should talk to.



Wrapping up the search

- **Search Committee finalizes work:** Once the committee completes its evaluations, its role is to provide thoughtful input—not make the final call. This includes highlighting candidate strengths and weaknesses, noting potential concerns or considerations.
 - Search Committee does not need to rank the candidates, but should provide their opinion regarding who they may recommend for hire.
- **Hiring Manager Role - Make Decision:** The hiring manager takes all of this into account but is ultimately responsible for making the final hiring decision and moving the process forward, whether that's initiating offer discussions, or pausing for additional business needs.
 - The hiring manager may have the search committee chair help with submitting HR paperwork as noted on the next slide.



Search is Finalized

- **Selected Candidate:** Submit the [Search Summary Form](#) (SSF) through DocuSign; this will give permission to reach out with a verbal offer followed by the formal offer letter - Search Committee Chair or Hiring Manager.
- **Regrets – candidates not selected**
 - HR will contact anyone who is not selected for an interview.
 - Committee Chair should contact candidates who were 1st round interviewed.
 - Hiring Manager or Search Committee Chair should contact candidates who were 2nd round interviewed.
 - Phone call or email is sufficient.
 - **bcc HR (Denise Scott) on the regret letter email for documentation purposes.**
- **Record Retention:** Once the search is finalized and closed, Search Committee members should shred/delete their notes. HR maintains Search Committee files for 5 years and this is considered the official record.



Common Reasons for a Failed Search

- Breach of confidentiality
- Discrimination
- Rushed work/failing to follow search process directions
- No adequate candidate(s)
- Salary negotiations fail
- Candidate(s) decline offer
- Business need changes
- Significant changes to job announcement
- Postponing a search
- If needed Submit the [Search Summary Form](#) (SSF) to declare a failed search

If you feel the Search Committee/Chair of the committee/Hiring Manager are not functioning as intended, please reach out to HR or Office of Equal Opportunity.



Contact Information

- **Denise Scott**

HR Business Partner for Talent Acquisition
Contact for Faculty and Non-Classified
searches
(208) 282-3830
denisescott@isu.edu

- **Stephanie Richardson**

HR Specialist
Contact for Classified searches
(208) 282-3830
stephanierichard1@isu.edu

- **Khalil Azizi**

International Faculty and Scholar Advisor - IPO
(208) 282-2963
khalilazizi@isu.edu

- **Disability Services Office**

(208) 282-3599
ada@isu.edu

- **Lisa Alexander-Santos**

Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX
Assistant Director and 504 Coordinator
(208) 282-4115
lisaalexandersant@isu.edu

- **ISU Career Site link: isu.edu/jobs**

- **Email Address for Talent Acquisition Team:**

jobs@isu.edu



Idaho State
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Thank You!

Please feel free to contact HR with any questions or concerns.

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