

# **HIRING GUIDE FOR MANAGERS OF THE STATE OF COLORADO PERSONNEL SYSTEM**

Prepared by the Division of Human Resources in the Department of Personnel & Administration. Revised May 2006. Last reviewed November 16, 2009, no changes.

## **GENERAL**

One of the most important management decisions managers will have to make is the selection of a new employee. How can managers help ensure that they will get the best person available? How can managers work optimally with the state personnel system in completing this crucial task? What is the manager's role in the hiring process? The purpose of this guide is to give managers a place to start in answering these questions. Additional information related to recruiting can be found in *Technical Assistance – Recruitment*, found on the DHR website.

## **THE MANAGER'S ROLE IS KEY**

Not only are you the immediate hiring decision maker, your role at the very beginning of the hiring process is critical. The initial decisions you make about how to fill your vacancy, and the way you communicate those decisions to others in the hiring process, may well determine whether you get the best person available.

## **USE THIS GUIDE AS A PLACE TO START**

As a state manager with delegated hiring authority, you are a recognized expert in your work area. Your knowledge and experience regarding the vacancy you are about to fill are the immediate factors in determining how the hiring process will proceed in this case. You will be supported and assisted in this process by your on-site human resources staff and by the staff of the Colorado Department of Personnel & Administration, Division of Human Resources (DPA/DHR). Some aspects of the hiring process may be useful after the hire, as you are developing the new employee's performance plan.

The following is a step-by-step guide on how to use your own resources and those of the personnel system in hiring successfully.

- Step One: It is your position. What do you want?
- Step Two: Plan the hiring process with your human resources staff.
- Step Three: Hiring authorities have many options.
- Step Four: Interview carefully.
- Step Five: Make your selection. Discuss your decision and check references.

## **STEP ONE: IT IS YOUR POSITION. WHAT DO YOU WANT?**

In your role as a manager, you often have great latitude in deciding how you wish to fill a position based on your particular needs. However, before you begin to look at some of your options, you need to address some basic questions and issues. These include:

- Does a vacancy on the staffing pattern actually exist?
- Are funds available to fill the position?
- Has the necessary approval to fill the position been obtained?
- Is there a current position description on file?
- Have any of the duties of the position substantially changed?
- Have the essential functions of the job been identified?
- Is succession planning or career path an issue?

After these basic questions and any others unique to your agency have been answered, you are almost ready to begin exploring the different options for filling a position. However, before you can determine which of the options outlined in the next section you wish to use, there are a few other questions that your human resources staff can help you address. These include:

- Does a departmental reemployment list exist for the classification? If so, the reemployment list must be used unless a transfer or a non-disciplinary demotion employee fills the position.
- Has a layoff in another department resulted in the displacement of employees whom you may want to consider?
- Has the Governor imposed an Executive Order mandating that laid off employees be given first consideration for vacancies?

Other issues that you will want to look at in making your hiring decision are:

- What is the time frame for filling the position? Does the position need to be filled immediately or can some time elapse before the position is filled? If time is not an overriding factor, you may want to consider using a formal testing process. However, if the position needs to be filled immediately, you may want to consider transfers or contacting former state employees who are eligible for reinstatement.
- Does the position require special or hard-to-find qualifications? If so, this will play a large role in your employment decision. You may decide to fill the position through a formal assessment process, which typically includes completion of a job analysis.
- Do you have a good mix of employees in terms of experience, and perspective?
- Is there a path that allows for promotion and career development? Do you need to grow your own staff in-house through promotions, or can you rely on the labor market for experienced candidates for employment? For example, you may want to announce your position as a promotional opportunity to provide growth for existing staff.
- Has the organizational mission changed, and does this affect the competencies required?
- Do other factors need to be considered?

After you have addressed the issues noted above, you will want to consider the following methods that you may use in filling your vacancy.

## **STEP TWO: PLAN THE HIRING PROCESS WITH YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES STAFF.**

Throughout the process of selecting a new employee, you will be working closely with your agency human resources staff to collect and exchange valuable information and to develop and implement the most efficient hiring plan for your vacancy.

Although each human resource professional will tailor a format to the unique characteristics of the vacancy and needs of your department, a common focus and main objective of any hiring plan is to attract and hire the most qualified person for the job.

Before your first meeting with your department's human resources staff, consider researching and assembling certain general information. Review the items in the following checklist to prepare for initial discussions with your human resources staff.

### Think about the nature of the position

- Read the Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ) and Class Description (CD) for the vacancy. These are available from your human resources staff. If necessary, revise the PDQ to accurately reflect the current duties assigned to the position. Ensure that the essential functions of the job have been identified.
- Review how the position fits into the overall organizational structure of the department, division and/or work unit.
- Identify the primary goals and objectives of the position.
- Consider the primary tasks, duties and activities of the position, particularly those that are most important for successful job performance. The key tasks identified can be used for the exam and performance planning when a new employee is hired.
- Review performance evaluation criteria for previous incumbents, to help identify the most important job elements.

### Outline how you would describe the "ideal" person for the position

- Determine the competencies a qualified individual must possess and demonstrate.
- Note which of the competencies are critical in order to differentiate superior from barely acceptable applicants, and ultimately, to identify the best qualified candidate(s).
- List the minimum qualifications (i.e., education, experience, licenses, certification) the person must possess in order to perform the job.

### Identify the best recruitment strategy to attract qualified individuals

- Thoroughly review your needs and options for filling the vacancy (as discussed in Step Three: Options for Filling Positions) and explore the time frames within which you want to fill the position.
- Evaluate the geographic location, the current labor market, and any unique aspects of the position that might deserve additional attention in advertising.

- Anticipate how many applicants are likely to apply and/or try to forecast what you might expect from your knowledge of the field. Identify employers, persons, or professional organizations who may be sources of potential applicants or who can provide advice about recruiting.

### Final preparations

- Determine the availability of other subject matter experts to assist in exam development and/or evaluation, employment interviewing, etc.
- Verify that all necessary paperwork has been completed and processed.
- Decide if you want to review applicant information other than (or in addition to) the job application, and if so, when. For example do you want the top three individuals from a testing process to submit official transcripts or additional job references?
- Confirm that candidate qualifications have been verified. You should do the background checks and verifications of qualifications or review the work if those tasks are delegated.

### Miscellaneous considerations

- If the vacancy is NOT a newly created position, information from previous appointments can be helpful. (Depending upon the availability of historical data for the vacancy, you will work with your human resources office during the job analysis to confirm or modify important job information to aid in test development.)
- If testing is required, determine which type(s) of test(s) (e.g., written, oral, performance) might best assess the competencies that are critical to successful job performance. Your human resources staff will guide and assist you with this.

The next two steps cover the remainder of the hiring process. Review these and list any questions you may have. Ensure that your questions are answered during your initial meeting with your human resources professional **AND** confirm that you both have the same expectations as to how the remainder of the selection process will occur. Arrange your next meeting/contact and note any necessary preparation.

## **STEP THREE: OPTIONS FOR FILLING POSITIONS.**

Rehires and Transfers: No testing is required; hiring can be completed in a few days.

Although important, speed of selection should not be the primary consideration for hiring authorities. Getting the right fit for the job should drive the process. Other considerations include, but are not limited to: knowledge of state government, familiarity with the department, and gaining a fresh perspective.

- Reemployment is a right of certified employees who were involuntarily separated or demoted from a specific class due to a layoff.
- Reinstatement is the discretionary appointment of a former or current employee to a class in which the person was certified and either resigned or voluntarily demoted in good standing.
- A transfer is the hire of a current state employee presently in the class being filled.

Individuals on a reemployment list must be considered first for any hire in specific class for one year following the layoff. As long as a reemployment list exists for the class being filled, no other list may be used to fill vacancies. Transfer applicants may always be considered along with reemployment list or any other employment list. All appointees must meet minimum qualifications for the position being filled.

Promotional announcement: Some form of testing is required if more than three qualified persons apply because the constitution and statute only allow the three highest-ranking persons to be referred for a hiring interview. Hiring can often be completed in a few weeks.

- Promotional announcements may be divisional, departmental, or service-wide (state-wide) depending on the availability of qualified candidates.

Open competitive announcement: This may be the greatest opportunity to get the best-qualified person for the job. Hiring may be completed in four to nine weeks or more.

Once selection activities are completed, including testing and referral of the top three candidates, your next step will be to interview the candidates referred to you. Use the following information to assist you in developing and conducting effective interviews.

#### **STEP FOUR: INTERVIEW CAREFULLY.**

Interviews can be done in one or several stages. Interviews typically involve the supervisor or appointing official authorized to make a selection but may also include a team of employees who will be working with the individual selected. Hiring decisions based on team interviews often result in hiring highly qualified employees who are readily accepted by their peers.

The interview process is your opportunity to ask each candidate questions to assist you in determining if that candidate is the “best fit” for your job. The most successful interviews are conducted as a structured dialogue between you and the applicant. Structured interviews include a “standard” set of questions that will be asked of each candidate. Research has shown that a well-structured interview process typically produces more effective hiring decisions.

Whichever interview format you select, it is important to limit inquiries to areas related to the job. Inquiries not related to the job must be avoided. During the interview you should talk about the job, its duties and responsibilities; the organization, its programs, achievements and benefits; career possibilities and opportunities for growth, development, and advancement; and the individual’s qualifications, abilities, experience, education, interests, and competencies.

Your agency human resources staff and/or the Colorado Civil Rights Division can provide you with a guide that advises what inquiries are lawful and unlawful in an interview.

Before asking a question during an interview, remember to ask yourself, “How does this question relate to the job?” Contact your human resources office for assistance if you are uncertain if an inquiry you wish to make is legal.

## **STEP FIVE: MAKE YOUR SELECTION. DISCUSS YOUR DECISION AND CHECK REFERENCES.**

After interviewing the candidates for your vacant position, you will have a good idea of which person you want to hire. Please note that at this stage in the selection process the interview is not considered an exam and should not be treated as such. You should use the interview to find the best fit for the job among your final candidates; you are not trying to create another referral list. You may want to discuss your decision with your staff and with your supervisor, in order to get their final ideas, to provide a check for what you have seen in the interview process, and to identify anything you may have missed.

This is also a good time to double check the information you have been provided. For example, does the doctor, nurse, engineer, CPA or attorney you are about to hire have a Colorado license in good standing? Have you checked with previous employers and read recent performance evaluations? A reference check now may save a great deal of time, embarrassment, or legal liability later. It is good practice to check a minimum of three references.

### Continue to work with your human resources staff

A final discussion with your human resources staff is important. This is an opportunity to review how well the hiring plan worked and to plan for future hiring processes.

In addition to informing human resources of your hiring decision and completing the hiring paperwork, take this opportunity to tie up any loose ends, such as planning to inform the non-selected candidates by a timely and courteous letter.

When you encounter excellent employee candidates, make sure you alert your colleagues and other state offices. Other managers who are seeking to fill positions with the same qualifications can use the list of excellent candidates.

If you believe that none of the persons you have interviewed is right for the job, you will need to consult your human resources staff to plan the next steps in your hiring process.

### Hiring: Another Beginning

Now that you have made your hiring decision, you have come to the end of one process and the beginning of another.

Make sure that your new employee:

- Receives an orientation plan,
- Signs the necessary disclosures and other paperwork required of state employees,
- Receives a performance plan and a copy of the current PDQ within 30 days of the hire date, and,
- Receives a training plan that will ensure adequate development of your new employee.

This is the beginning of the probationary period for new employees and trial service for promoted employees. This time is the “final exam” for the newly hired employee. Set clear expectations and use this time to determine if you made a good hiring decision. The employee should display good work habits, and the competencies needed for the job. This is the time that you, as the hiring manager, can have the greatest impact on the success or failure of the new employee on the job. Any performance issues must be documented and addressed well before the one-year certification milestone.

A new employee in the State Personnel System will automatically become certified one year after hire. If a new employee is not working out, it is important that performance issues are documented and addressed before the certification date, as termination of the employee is the only way to prevent certification. In the case of trial service, certification occurs at the end of the six months unless disciplinary action is taken to demote or terminate the employee. Check with your human resources staff on specific requirements before taking any action. Certification should not be a problem if the hiring process has worked well, you have made a good choice, and you have trained your employee well.

Every attempt is made to keep this technical assistance updated. For more detailed information, refer to the Personnel Board Rules and Director’s Administrative Procedures or contact your agency human resources office. Subsequent revisions to rule or law could cause conflicts in this information. In such a situation, the laws and rules are the official source upon which to base a ruling or interpretation. This document is a guide, not a contract or legal advice.

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