

SkillSurvey FAQs

How many candidates are subject to a reference check for any single recruitment?

WHRH Ch. 244, Sec. 244.050 (2) states *“Reference checks will be limited to the top candidate(s).”* The number of candidate’s reference checked will be determined by the agency based on the specific recruitment and needs of position. When filling a single position, the agency will typically conduct a reference check on the top scoring candidates which may be a single final candidate or multiple candidates based on interview results. When filling multiple positions, groups of candidates may be reference checked simultaneously based on interview results and the number of positions to be filled.

How many references are required?

WHRH Ch. 104, Sec. 104.100 (2) states *“At least two supervisory reference checks must be conducted on every job candidate, regardless of the position for which they are applying.”*

In addition, WHRH Ch. 244, Sec. 244.050 (3) states *“Prior to making an offer of employment, at least three references will be obtained, two of which will be supervisory references, including the top candidate’s current supervisor whenever possible.”*

When using SkillSurvey, candidates are asked to identify at least 3 references, 2 of which are or were the candidate’s direct managers in order to continue their application. As such, recruiters can “finalize” a candidate report after 3 references have responded, including 2 direct manager (supervisor) references.

If using SkillSurvey, are we required to contact a state employee’s current supervisor?

Yes. WHRH Ch. 104, Sec. 104.100 (2) states *“Prior to an offer being extended to an employee that holds a position within state service (i.e. permanent, project, or LTE), the employee’s current supervisor shall be contacted as one of the supervisory references and a review of their P-file is required.”*

In addition, WHRH Ch. 244, Sec. 244.050 (9) states *“If the appointment of a current state employee is being considered, no offer of employment can be made unless the personnel file of the individual has been reviewed by human resources, as the appointing authority’s designee, and a reference check from the current supervisor is completed.”*

Candidates who are current state employees need to enter their current supervisor as a reference on the reference form in SkillSurvey. This is communicated to candidates in the best practice email. Recruiters cannot add references on behalf of candidates in SkillSurvey.

Will peer references suffice in a situation where supervisory references are not available?

WHRH Ch. 104, Sec. 104.100 (2) states *“The best and preferred references generally come from former supervisors. However in the event the candidate has limited work experience, (students, member of the military, etc.) teachers or other community leaders will suffice. Peer and subordinate references may also be of use but do not fulfil the requirement of a supervisory reference.”*

To “count” teachers and/or community leaders as a supervisory reference, the candidate must identify this type of reference as a “manager” on the reference form. This is communicated to candidates in the best practice email. SkillSurvey will not recognize teachers and/or community leaders as fulfilling the supervisor requirement unless they are entered as “managers”.

A person listed as a reference stated that their organizational policy prohibits them from providing professional references. Is there anything we can tell them to alleviate their concerns about providing a SkillSurvey reference?

The [initial Request for References email](#) the candidates receive notifies the candidate that references will be responding as individuals, not as representatives of any company or organization. It also notifies them that no one will see references' individual responses because all feedback is aggregated and made available in one confidential summary report.

Candidates are required to consent to [SkillSurvey Terms and Conditions](#) prior to moving forward with the SkillSurvey electronic reference check. In doing so, the candidate releases references and their respective employers or related company/organization, and any affiliated officers, directors, agents, and employees from any and all Claims/Damages that the candidate may have arising out of the disclosure of information (i.e., information provided in the SkillSurvey electronic reference check).

After candidates provide consent to the SkillSurvey Terms and Conditions, they can send automated communications to their professional references. References entered by the candidate will then receive an [automated email from SkillSurvey](#) asking them to complete a professional reference survey for the candidate. This email notifies the references that they will be responding as individuals, not as representatives of any company or organization. It also notifies them that the candidate has executed a legally binding agreement that releases the references, as well as any organization with which they are now affiliated or have been affiliated in the past, from any potential liability for providing information in the SkillSurvey electronic reference check.

What should the recruiter do if the candidate cannot provide 3 references in total, or 2 supervisory references to meet the reference requirements?

There are situations where candidates may still not be able to provide 3 references, even after considering teachers or other community leaders. WHRH Ch. 244, Sec. 244.050 (3) states *"In the event three references cannot be obtained, the supervisor will contact assigned HR staff to assess efforts and determine whether there are sufficient references to move forward."*

By default, SkillSurvey will not allow candidates to send the link to references asking them to complete the reference check until the required number of references are entered (3 references, 2 of which are supervisors). However, SkillSurvey has a mechanism to **override reference requirements** when at least 2 references are provided. See the [Recruiter Reference Requirements Guide](#) for instructions on overriding reference requirements. Note the recruiter should confirm that the candidate cannot provide any additional references (including teachers or other community leaders) before overriding reference requirements.

Furthermore, SkillSurvey will not allow a candidate report to be finalized until the reference requirements are met by default. In a situation where only 2 references are received, recruiters can request to **force finalize** and agency admins can approve or cancel requests at their discretion. See the [Recruiter Reference Requirements Guide](#) for instructions on submitting a force finalization request.

SkillSurvey cannot allow a reference to be conducted if the candidate has only provided one reference. Likewise, a candidate report cannot be produced if only one reference has responded. See the [Recruiter Reference Requirements Guide](#) for instructions on filing a candidate as cancelled.

Can we reuse a candidate’s reference check?

Currently there is no statewide policy on the reuse of reference checks. Agencies should use current agency best practice when determining if they will reuse a reference check. For example, a recruiter completed reference checks for their top 3 candidates and made a hire. Shortly after starting, the new hire resigns. The recruiter offers the position to one of the other candidates from the same recruitment. Most likely it would not be necessary to conduct a new set of reference checks as nothing is likely to have changed since the previous hire was made. When determining if you should reuse a reference check, things to consider include:

- How long has it been since the candidate was reference checked?
- Is it for the same recruitment or job classification?
- Were other candidates being considered reference checked using the same survey tool in SkillSurvey?

Will HR or hiring managers initiate the process?

DPM has not authorized supervisor access to SkillSurvey. SkillSurvey is managed by HR and non-HR staff will have access only in limited situations. Program support staff may be granted access by DPM central provided a signed confidentiality agreement is completed. Please contact Andrew.Geissler@wisconsin.gov to request SkillSurvey access for non-HR staff.

Can specific SkillSurvey reference surveys be selected for use based on job groups/classifications?

SkillSurvey has a large volume of job-specific surveys available for use. Recruiters should use their discretion to identify the most appropriate survey based on relevance to the job. In the future, BMRS will conduct an analysis to match specific surveys with classifications as a resource for agency HR.

Can I add agency specific questions to a survey from the SkillSurvey reference bank?

Yes, it is possible to add additional questions to any survey in the system, but this would be very uncommon. Any questions added will become permanent to that specific survey. Only DPM central can add questions. Please contact Andrew.Geissler@wisconsin.gov to discuss this option.

Who can view reference check reports?

Reference check reports from the SkillSurvey system can be provided to the supervisor. The reference checks should be handled confidentially the same as they are now.

What if a reference writes something inappropriate in the comments that shows up in the SkillSurvey report?

Supervisors should be educated on what information they can and cannot consider. The use of SkillSurvey does not change what the supervisor may “hear” or “read”. Ideally, HR would catch this and redact that comment, however, a reference may say something on a phone interview, the same as they could write it in the comments. The State of Wisconsin does not discriminate based on age, race, national origin, any medical or pregnancy status, religion, gender, sexual orientation, criminal or pending criminal charge. Regardless of your reference checking method, supervisors should be educated to disregard certain unsolicited information that is illegal or not relevant to the hiring process.

References provided are anonymous, how will hiring managers follow-up for additional info?

Individual reference results are anonymous and hiring managers will not be able to determine which reference supplied each of the comments on a candidate report. However, recruiters will know which of the references completed the reference check. If a reference check requires follow-up, hiring managers can contact each of the references for clarification or additional information.

Where should we keep SkillSurvey reference check results?

SkillSurvey has electronic recordkeeping, but the State of Wisconsin does not rely on SkillSurvey to store records for records retention purposes. Agency HR are required to store reference check results in the recruitment file. SkillSurvey reference check results can easily be stored electronically or printed and kept in the paper recruitment file by the recruiter. Refer to [WHRH 104](#) for additional information.

Will references provided be subject to open records requests?

References are closed records under s.19.36(10), Wis. Stats. However, references checks may be requested and will be produced under discovery requests in litigation matters including WERC appeals.

What if the candidate's IP address is highlighted in red on the cover page of the candidate report?

It means it matches one or more of the references IP address. The IP address is dependent on the internet/servers the person is connected too, if they are all coming from the same city, state, and organization it could be that they are accessing SkillSurvey while at work from their computer/devices. If they are coming from different cities, states and organization that is when we recommend reaching out to the references, not candidate initially.

In cases where there are matching IP addresses and there may be a question about the validity of the reference submissions, we recommend that you contact the reference(s) and ask the following questions to confirm the legitimacy of the survey submission.

1. Did you complete the survey for the candidate?
If they say they did not complete the survey, the candidate may have completed the survey and a conversation with the candidate is warranted.
2. Do you remember when and where you were when you completed the survey?
There is no right or wrong answer for this question but is meant to give a general idea of the reference's physical location when they completed the survey.
3. Did you complete the survey online through the link that was e-mailed to you from SkillSurvey?

We suggest these questions, because it is possible that the candidate and reference may have talked on the phone. During this conversation, the reference may have sent the candidate the survey to complete while the reference provides the answers to the candidate over the phone. Asking if they completed it online would help you understand if they took the action to respond themselves. Please note, if you do talk to the references, your questions and the demeanor of the conversation should be like doing a follow up. The references should not feel like there is a wrong answer to any question.