

OFFICE OF STATE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

- DIVISION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BULLETIN -

Date: November 13, 2014

Subject: Balanced Interview Panel Policy

Locator No.: OSER-0381-AA

This bulletin provides an update on the standard for balanced interview panel policy for hiring in the state civil service for all state agencies and the University of Wisconsin System campuses. This bulletin sets forth the *minimum* standard that agencies must comply with to ensure continued equal employment opportunity (EEO) for all applicants. Agencies may opt to require a more stringent policy, as long as at least the minimum requirements in this bulletin are maintained. This bulletin replaces OSER-0365-AA dated June 4, 2014.

Purpose

Pursuant to s. 230.01, s. 230.04 (5) & (9), s. 230.16, s. 230.18, Wis. Stats., ch. ER 43.01, ER 43.045, Wis. Adm. Code, the Wisconsin Office of State Employment Relations has the responsibility to ensure a fair and equitable personnel selection process by developing effective personnel policy and procedures based on the merit principle so that every job applicant is given an equal opportunity for consideration without regard to sex, race, disability, color, age (40 and over), national origin, ancestry, arrest or conviction record, religion, creed, marital status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, military service, or the use or nonuse of lawful products off the employer's premises during nonworking hours.

The state's long-range objective is to attain a workforce that mirrors the general population of the overall labor force from which it hires and serves.

To achieve this goal, state agencies must apply the standard of a balanced panel policy for all interview panels. Beyond that, the best practice is to pursue openness and inclusiveness at all other levels of the hiring review and selection process including: examination rating panels, oral boards, search and screen committees, and hiring committees.

Composition of a Balanced Interview Panel

A balanced interview panel must be diversely composed with at least one person representing an affirmative action group, i.e. racial/ethnic minorities, women, or persons with disabilities. What this means is that, a 2-member panel would include either one woman, or one racial/ethnic minority, or one person with a disability.

The composition of the panel does not necessarily need to reflect the composition of the applicant pool. For example, the following 2-member panels would be considered balanced: a panel with an ethnic/racial minority member and a member who does not represent an ethnic/racial minority, a panel with a disabled member and a non-disabled member, or a panel with a male member and a female member.

Also, all panels must be informed about the State of Wisconsin's long-range objective of attaining a workforce that mirrors the general population of the overall labor force from which it hires and serves.

Benefits

Incorporating a balanced interview panel policy promotes equal opportunity throughout the entire employment process by:

- 1) enhancing objective discussion about the qualifications of all candidates
- 2) eliminating bias relating to communication style and content
- 3) providing comprehensive application of benchmarks, and
- 4) reducing the overall effects of racial, cultural, gender and disability status differences between the panel members and the applicants so that there would be a more complete and fair evaluation of applicants' responses and qualifications.

Agency Affirmative Action Officer's Roles

The agency Affirmative Action Officer (AAO) is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the balanced interview panel policy in the hiring and selection process of all positions. Specifically, the AAO has the following roles:

- a) In the selection process, work with hiring supervisors and/or human resources staff, as requested, to develop a pool of diverse panel members who may be internal or external to the organization.
- b) When an agency's good faith efforts to develop a diverse, balanced panel are not successful, a waiver of the balanced interview panel requirement must be approved by the AAO.

Documentation Required

Agencies must document the composition of the panel members for each position in the recruitment file. If the panel was not balanced, agencies must document the efforts made to balance the panel. Also, agencies must maintain documentation verifying that the panel was informed about the State of Wisconsin's long-range objective of attaining a workforce that mirrors the general population of the overall labor forces it serves and from which it hires.

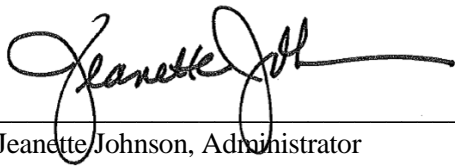
Waiver Process

When an agency cannot obtain a balanced interview panel after a series of good faith efforts, a waiver for approval must be obtained through the agency Affirmative Action Officer.

Sample Balanced Interview Panel Policy

Every state agency should have a balanced interview panel policy, including all the above provisions. For reference, a sample balanced interview panel policy is included with this bulletin. It is intended as a guide for agencies in developing their own policies, and should be modified as needed to meet specific policies and structures. See attachment.

For further assistance in developing and implementing the balanced panel policy, please contact OSER Division of Affirmative Action at 608-266-5709 or OSERDAA@wi.gov.



Jeanette Johnson, Administrator
Division of Affirmative Action

Sample Balanced Interview Panel Policy

Policy Statement	The [Agency's Name] supports the use of balanced interview panels to ensure equal employment opportunity. The [Agency's Name] believes that diverse, balanced interview panels help provide equal opportunity in the hiring and selection process. Balanced interview panels help minimize cultural, racial, gender and disability differences between interviewers and interviewees, eliminate bias relating to communication style and content, and provide a more complete and fair evaluation of responses and qualifications of all candidates.
Panel Composition	A balanced interview panel must be diversely composed with at least one person representing an affirmative action group, i.e. racial/ethnic minorities, women, or persons with disabilities. For example, a 2-member panel would include either one woman, or one racial/ethnic minority, or one person with a disability. At a minimum, all panels must be informed about the State of Wisconsin's long-range objective of attaining a workforce that mirrors the general population of the overall labor force from which it hires and serves.
Balanced Panel Use	[Name of Agency] will apply the standard of a balanced panel policy for all interview panels. Openness and inclusiveness will be pursued at all other levels of the hiring review and selection process including the following: examination rating panels, oral boards, search and screen committees, and hiring committees.
Waiver Process	<p>When an agency is not able to obtain a diverse, balanced interview panel after a series of good faith efforts, a waiver for approval must be requested from the agency's Affirmative Action (AA) Officer.</p> <p>To receive a waiver, the hiring supervisor must first document the efforts made to acquire target group members for the panel. If the Affirmative Action Officer provides additional suggestions for achieving a balanced panel, the hiring supervisor must follow through. If these efforts are still unsuccessful, a waiver must be granted. It is important that the hiring supervisor give adequate notice for this process before finalizing the panel, so that undue delay does not occur in implementing the panel.</p>
Documentation	Hiring supervisors must document the composition of the panel members for each position in the recruitment file. If the panel was not balanced, the hiring supervisors must document the efforts made to balance the panel. Also, hiring supervisors must provide documentation verifying that the panel was informed about the State of Wisconsin's long-range objective of attaining a workforce that mirrors the general population of the overall labor forces it serves and from which it hires.
Responsible Officer and Monitoring	<p>The agency's AA Officer has primary responsibility for the oversight of the implementation of this policy for the hiring and selection process of all positions at the [Agency's Name].</p> <p>Upon request, the AA Officer will work with hiring supervisors and human resources during the selection process by identifying potential affirmative action group members, both internal and external, to serve on the panels.</p>