

OCEA and County HRS partnered in offering two workshops to OCEA members on the topics of “Completing Your County Application” and “Interview Techniques.” Written questions were submitted by members in attendance at those workshops. Below are the County’s responses to questions submitted.

COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION - FAQ

If you complete an online application, do you need to attach a resume too (I understand that HRS doesn't look at resumes but only online applications)?

The County only considers online applications for efficiency purposes. All applicants are given the same instructions on how to apply and complete the employment application. Submitting a resume in lieu of the online application will be considered an incomplete application.

Which types of resumes are more effective (brief bullet points or paragraphs)?

The County of Orange accepts online applications. We do not accept resumes in lieu of the application.

Do you have to list all of your previous jobs (10 years, 20 years, 30 years) if they are related to your profession or only list a few?

Please be as detailed as possible. Remember, all of our recruitments are competitive and only the applicants whose application materials demonstrate the posted minimum and/or desirable qualifications will advance in the recruitment.

Should you use your current supervisor as a reference?

You do not have to use your current supervisor as a voluntary reference; however, all County employee files are reviewed and current supervisors are contacted as part of the required reference check prior to making a job offer.

How many references are sufficient?

Three references are sufficient. If you do not have three references, you may provide the contact information for your previous employers/supervisors or provide a copy of your previous employment evaluation if the job was not within the County.

Are references called for current county employees? Is the current supervisor/manager the only person called for a reference?

The County requires references from the past three employers/supervisors.

In the application, how detailed does my answer have to be for each qualification that is applied to me? Do I write two or three sentences?

Remember, all of our recruitments are competitive and only the applicants whose application materials demonstrate the posted minimum and/or desirable qualifications will advance in the recruitment.

If my resume indicates that I “make recommendations,” could HRS assume that I also “draw conclusions” or does it have to be written?

Recruiters are trained to review for qualifications as described in the application. We highly suggest providing detailed information in your application.

Wouldn't the application look contrived if you use all of the key words from the job bulletin?

Not necessarily. It is important to provide details of your experience that support your use of key words. We do conduct assessments on the identified competencies in order to determine the applicant's skill set.

Do you focus on the supplemental question answers or the resume when it comes to rating the application?

Application raters review and rate the contents within the employment application and the responses to the supplemental questions. The raters are given job related criteria which is developed by the recruiter to determine their ratings. Raters are instructed to look for specific examples of education and experience to each of the competencies identified in the recruitment bulletin. Resumes are not accepted in lieu of the supplemental questions.

Do you evaluate minimum qualifications by reviewing the cover letter too?

Recruiters evaluate the employment application and supplemental questionnaire (if applicable) as they demonstrate how the applicant's education and experience relate to the position. Recruiters do not typically refer to the cover letter to make a determination regarding minimum qualifications.

Should I detail experience I have gained in extra-curricular activities (like clubs/organizations) if I don't have this experience at work?

Yes, if you have relevant experience it does not have to be at work. For example, you may have experience as a team lead in a volunteer capacity.

What is the difference between an AAP and QAP?

An AAP is an Application Appraisal Panel Rating. This assessment consists of two or three job knowledge experts rating the application and responses to the supplemental questions. A QAP is a Qualification Appraisal Panel, which is also referred to as an Oral Interview. A panel of two or three job knowledge experts will ask a series of structured questions and score the responses to the questions.

What advice do you have for the online assessment process? They seem geared toward those who are recent college graduates. I haven't had to use pencil and paper to complete a math problem in years; why is that a component of some of the online assessments? And why is there a time limit when completing the math portion?

Information on practice tests is provided on the Human Resource Services (HRS) website at

<http://www.ocgov.com/gov/hr/jobs/faq>. Practice tests are also available online. The math questions assess critical thinking, information processing, and reasoning skills. Please note that candidates are not expected to respond to all the questions. If you are not able to answer a question, you may want to skip it and move on to the next. Some sections are timed because the competency being assessed is critical thinking.

Are there any resources for practice online assessment tests?

Yes, there are practice tests available on the Human Resource Services (HRS) website at <http://www.ocgov.com/gov/hr/jobs/faq>.

Why are the online assessment tests on a totally different subject than the job (i.e., the job requirements are clear, but the tests have nothing to do with the job)?

The purpose of an assessment is to measure job-related skills and competencies. For some recruitments, we look at broad competencies that are key to jobs across all positions Countywide (e.g. dependability, initiative, critical thinking). Skills or experience that are unique to a particular position are more often evaluated as part of the selection (hiring) interview.

Are there standard answers for the online assessments?

There are different types of online assessments. Assessments are designed to measure skills and/or competencies that are critical to the position.

Can you recommend any books or study material to help me prepare for the Staff Specialist exam?

You may check out books related to Civil Service and Employment tests at your local library. You may also research books at www.civilservicestudyguides.com.

Can a candidate fail an online assessment?

The purpose of an assessment is to measure job-related skills and competencies. As such, similar to other assessments, candidates may fail to advance to the next step in the process based on their performance on an online exam.

I keep failing assessments I don't know why. How do I know what I'm doing wrong?

Please reach out to the recruiter. While scores are not released, we are able to share the areas of the exam where you scored lower.

A co-worker told me that the Excel test is not part of the grading that qualifies you for the A or B Eligible List. Is this true?

All assessments are developed for a specific recruitment. An Excel test may be given and scored if the position requires daily use and knowledge of Excel.

Why does the County generalize the job requirements for certain classifications like Staff Specialist in one recruitment? Why don't you make different recruitments for Payroll Staff Specialist, Administrative

Staff Specialist, etc.?

Some classifications are broadbanded such as Staff Specialist and the Administrative Manager series. Although the individual skill sets are different by position or department, the underlying competencies for some classifications are often the same. Therefore, whenever possible recruitments with a broader scope are conducted to create efficiencies.

Do you have workshops where we can bring in our application or do you employ someone who will review our application or resume in person with us?

Currently HRS does not offer this service. We will take this under advisement moving forward.

How is an applicant selected? 100% based on interview or partial on interview, partial on references, partial on job application?

The application, interview and references are all important pieces of information that can be used by the hiring authority to assist them in making a decision.

Once we make it to the Eligible List, what does that mean if you are not selected for the position? How long do we stay on the list? How do we know if a different list will be established for the next opening?

An Eligible List typically lasts from 6 -12 months or when it is determined that a new recruitment is necessary. We suggest that you complete an online interest card for the classifications of your interest through NeoGov. The interest card feature will automatically notify you when a recruitment opens.

Do you hire during a hiring freeze?

During a hiring freeze the CEO Budget Team reviews all position unfreeze requests to determine the necessity and impacts of service if the position is not filled. The recruiting team will only proceed with a recruitment if authorized by CEO Budget.

What if there is not a classification specifically for your Assignment? What should you do next?

All employees are assigned to a classification that best fit or align with the duties and responsibilities of their particular assignment.

What is the procedure for requesting a re-classification?

The procedure for requesting a reclassification is outlined in the appropriate Memorandum of Understanding (see here: <http://www.ocea.org/representation/agency-and-mou.html>). The incumbent or a department manager initiates the reallocation or reclassification request and submits it to the HRS Satellite Team for their department. This team determines the feasibility of the request. If it is denied, the requester will be notified. If the request is determined feasible, a Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ) is given to the incumbent and supervisor to complete. Once the PDQ is received, the HRS Satellite Team reviews the PDQ, conducts a desk audit if appropriate and compiles a reallocation request packet. This is sent to the HRS Team manager to review and sign. Once signed by the HRS Satellite Team manager, the packet is sent to the HRS Classification and Compensation Division for review and approval.

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES - FAQ

What is the difference between an AAP and QAP?

An AAP is an Application Appraisal Panel Rating. This assessment consists of two or three job knowledge experts rating the application and responses to the supplemental questions. A QAP is a Qualification Appraisal Panel, which is also referred to as an Oral Interview. A panel of two or three job knowledge experts will ask a series of structured questions and score the responses to the questions.

What can I do to score well on a QAP? I get nervous and I feel I do horribly, which doesn't allow me to go to the next stage.

The Qualification Appraisal Panel (QAP) is considered an oral interview assessment. The assessment questions are developed from the competencies and desirable qualifications described in the job bulletin. It is a good idea to review the bulletin ahead of time and write down examples of how your knowledge and experience qualify you for the position. We also suggest that you practice with a friend or relative beforehand to help ease your nerves.

Who grades the applicant during the QAP process? Interviewers or different staffs?

The QAP or Structured Oral Interview panel members score individually. Their scores are reviewed for consistency and proper justification by the recruiter at the completion of the interviews.

Are selection panelist interviewers from the hiring program?

Yes, selection interview panel members are usually subject matter experts (SMEs) from the hiring departments. Experts from external agencies are sometimes invited to be part of the panel as well.

Does the selector see your name or are you using a number to rate each candidate to schedule interviews or move on to the next step in the process?

Names of the candidates are provided to the panel members.

Do the interview panel members have to score within 1 point or so with each other, to ensure there is no favoritism or weighted scoring?

Yes, Oral Interview Panelists are instructed to score within one point from one another. The recruiter verifies the outcome to ensure the standards are met prior to continuing with the recruitment.

Can you bring an outline to reference when interviewing?

Yes, you may bring notes, work samples, references, and letters of recommendations.

How can we research what applications and/or software are used in the department before going to the interview?

You may contact the recruiter for details of the position.

Will having a lot of prior experience for a job, but not having the required license or certification prevent you from going to the next step in the hiring process?

Yes, if the minimum qualification requires a certificate or license only those candidates who possess the required certifications or licenses will advance to the next phase in the recruitment.

What is a good response to the question “what are some of your weaknesses?”

Make sure the weakness you select is not critical to the job, and mention the steps you are taking to improve the weakness.

If the panel said you have 5 minutes, but with my experiences in many fields that I’d like to talk about it’ll be a bit more than 5 minutes, should I stop? When can I add it so they know all of my excellent work performance?

When interviewing for a position, we recommend you emphasize the knowledge and expertise that corresponds with the desirable qualifications of the position. It is helpful in preparation for interviews to outline your experience and successes and time your interview responses.

Sometimes the questions asked in a QAP are almost the same? How do we answer similarly-phrased questions?

Re-emphasize the key takeaways you want the interviewer to hear.

Can a department change scores to get applicants through the process?

No, assessment scores are not shared with the departments.

After an oral interview or if I don’t get a job offer, is it acceptable to ask for feedback from the recruiter?

Yes, you may request feedback from the recruiter.

What is the difference between list "A" or "B" on an Eligible List?

The only difference between the "A" list and "B" list is the outcome of the overall scoring. Both lists contain candidates who scored higher than average.

How long does an Eligibility List last?

The Eligible List is typically valid for 6 - 12 months depending on the number of vacancies and attrition rate.

Can we request to see the Eligible List so that we know how many people are on the A and B lists?

The Eligible List contents are confidential.

Are people who make the "A" list rated in order on that list?

No, the candidates are not ranked, but rather grouped into different bands: A and B based on their performance on assessments.

What is list "C" and what are your chances of being called for an interview if you are on the "C" list?

The County no longer establishes a C list.

Can you tell me more about rotational assignments?

Departments or agencies handle their own rotational assignment opportunities. In these cases, you may refer your questions directly to the division where the vacancy exists or the HR liaison assigned to the department.

I want to know how to find positions that are available for transfer or promotion. Also, how can I find out what positions are available in other County departments?

Current employment, transfer, and promotional opportunities can be found on our Career Pages at <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/oc> (click the drop down next to the word "Menu" in the upper left-hand corner).

Do all agencies in the County follow transfer request policies? In the SSA Children & Family Services Division, not all programs follow transfer policies (some people are chosen not on a list).

All agencies are required to consider the transfer list when a request for a formal referral is received. However, the process is different for interdepartmental rotations. Rotations within the same department are at the Department Head's discretion.

How does the process differ for continuous recruitments (for example, Social Worker positions)?

Continuous recruitments are conducted in the same manner as other recruitments. The only difference is applications are received continuously and names are added onto the Eligible List on an ongoing basis.

I have heard of promotions where only one person was on a list and only that person was interviewed and got the position. Are there recruitments where there is only one person interviewing for the position?

Some classifications within the County require specialized training and/or certifications. These classifications are difficult to recruit for, which may result in few qualified individuals on the Eligible List.

Why does it take so long for a job to be open?

There are many factors considered before opening a recruitment. The process includes acquiring authorization for proper funding and allocation. Some departments have internal approval processes while others do not. Once the approval is received, recruiters work with the hiring managers behind the scenes to ensure the recruitment plan, bulletin, and assessment(s) are identified prior to opening the

recruitment.

Is pay ever negotiable when accepting a job offer?

Employment offers are typically made at the hiring step. In some cases, pay may be negotiated if authorized by the department head.