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Recruitment Tools

Best Practices for Job Design and Interviews

June 20, 2023



Human resources leader, manager, hiring manager or recruiter



The Future Skills Centre – Centre des Compétences futures (FSC-CCF) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead.

The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada.

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Key terms

inuglugijaittuq: “A collaborative and collective process that emphasizes the interdependence, growth, success, and importance of the group.”¹

Inuit land claim beneficiary: An Inuk who is a part of a community that has negotiated a comprehensive land claim with the federal government.²

Inuit Nunangat: The homeland of Inuit in Canada, encompassing Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut across Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

provisional appointment: A temporary hiring of a person into a vacant permanent position, often under provision due to candidates lacking some of the required qualifications.

¹ Nunavut Department of Education, *Inuglugijaittuq: Foundation for Inclusive Education in Nunavut Schools*, 29.

² Statistics Canada, “Enrollment Under an Inuit Land Claims Agreement.”



Designing flexible positions

Job-sharing

One-third of Canadians say that balancing work and life responsibilities is their main source of stress.³ For Inuit, serving family and community are core values and require even more responsibility. A 2019 survey found that among Inuit women, childcare was the most frequently cited support that they needed in order to find and maintain employment.⁴ As well, 62 per cent of people in Inuit Nunangat who participate in land-based activities do so to share with the community⁵ – and participation requires time away from the workplace. Workplace policies therefore need to prioritize flexibility.



Flexible work arrangements are increasingly common among employers across Canada.⁶ They play an important role in retaining workers, maximizing skill sets, and providing employees with greater work–life balance and integration. The Government of Nunavut provides job-sharing as an option for roles in which two individuals share the responsibilities and tasks of one full-time position. Full-time employees can rotate every three months or more.⁷ Job-sharing accommodates employees with a range of social, cultural, and other priorities to enable them to fulfill their community and family responsibilities while remaining engaged in the workforce. This flexibility creates greater satisfaction among employees, and employers also benefit by keeping skilled and experienced employees in the workforce.

Other industries have adopted similar policies. For example, at Raglan Mine in Nunavik, casual employment and job-sharing opportunities help integrate new employees into the workplace. This practice has allowed new recruits to gradually experience roles so they can assess whether a role is a good fit. Job rotations give employees the chance to move laterally within the organization, offering employees ways to expand their skills, learn new roles, and explore career options.

³ Sanofi, “Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey.”

⁴ Arriagada and Bleakney, *Inuit Participation in the Wage and Land-Based Economies*.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Fiser, MacLaine, and Lalonde, *Working Together*.

⁷ Government of Nunavut, “Job Share Employees.”

Provisional appointments and trial roles

The Nunatsiavut Government (NG) offers provisional appointments for candidates who don't meet the minimum requirements of a role but possess the necessary soft skills.⁸ These types of policies positively impact an organization's ability to recruit and retain Inuit land claim beneficiaries. The selected individuals are further supported by the NG through succession plans, mentoring, coaching, informal on-the-job training, and formalized educational opportunities. Additionally, employees can work reduced hours to complete educational requirements that will allow them to grow in their roles.

The NG also provides current employees with opportunities to trial new positions for six weeks. During this trial period, the employee is granted a leave of absence to carry out the responsibilities of their new role. If the employee meets the expectations outlined in the role, they're formally confirmed into the new role and resign from their former role. At the end of the trial period, the employee can still return to their former role if the new role doesn't meet their expectations. Alternatively, if the employee performs below a satisfactory level, they're asked to return to their former position.⁹

These examples demonstrate the value of flexible hiring practices, mentorship opportunities, and on-the-job training in Inuit Nunangat. They reflect the Canadian Council on Learning's Inuit holistic learning model, which highlights the journey of lifelong learning. Along this journey, an Inuk experiences learning in informal settings such as in the home and on the land, and in formal settings such as in the classroom and workplace.¹⁰

⁸ Nunatsiavut Civil Service, *Employees Division Regulations (2017)*.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Canadian Council on Learning, *Redefining How Success Is Measured*.

Conducting inclusive interviews

Focus on evaluating only essential job requirements

Some skills and requirements are essential to a job, while others aren't. For inclusive recruitment in Inuit Nunangat, consider the difference between essential job requirements and optional tasks or qualifications. When job postings include non-essential qualifications, candidates without these skills may be discouraged from applying.

For essential job requirements, prioritize skills an employee will use regularly in the role. For other qualifications, like a certain level of education or the ability to speak multiple languages, carefully consider whether they're truly requirements. If a posting lists a degree as required education, the job should draw on the knowledge obtained through that degree. Otherwise, listing equivalencies such as "or five years of experience in a related field" shows the skill sets you're looking for, opens up the possibility of a candidate leveraging their on-the-land or community-based experience, and allows you to better determine the suitability of candidates.

As you prepare for the interview, think about the essential competencies required for the job. What do candidates have to know and do to perform the job safely and successfully? What skills and knowledge would be assets to the role? Can candidates be trained in these supporting skills on the job? The interview process should assess only necessary skills and knowledge requirements.

When reviewing resumés, take the time to call a candidate to review their work history and experience. Sometimes, if resumés are prepared by a third party, key experience is missing. By connecting directly with the applicant, you can avoid unnecessarily screening out a qualified candidate.



Prepare for interviews

Inuglugijaittuq is a collaborative and collective process that emphasizes the interdependence, growth, success, and importance of the group.¹¹ Approach all interviews with these values in mind. Doing so will help ground you in the process and foster an inclusive environment for the job candidate.

Inclusive interviewers work to remove bias from the interview. Whenever possible, ensure your hiring committee is diverse to bring multiple perspectives to the table.

One of the ways organizations have attempted to remove bias is by using anonymized resumé reviews. Past successes have included mitigating gender bias in symphonies and scientific research organizations that had lower representations of women.¹² However, in a study in France, firms that used an anonymized process actually *reduced* the chance of interviewing a person from an equity-deserving group, likely because the firm already had a positive bias toward recruiting from equity-deserving groups, which was not possible to maintain with an anonymized process.¹³ Before taking an approach like this one, make sure you determine whether it would be right for your organization.

When you communicate with candidates, describe the role and share what candidates can expect during the interview, including the length of time, the types of questions they'll be asked, and whether they'll have a chance to ask questions themselves. Be clear if there will be multiple stages.

¹¹ Nunavut Department of Education, *Inuglugijaittuq: Foundation for Inclusive Education in Nunavut Schools*, 29.

¹² Johnson and Kirk, "To Reduce Gender Bias."

¹³ Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, "Unintended Effects of Anonymous Resumes."

Prepare your interview questions by prioritizing Inuit values and ways of communicating, ensuring you use the same rubric for all applicants, including non-Inuit candidates. This approach aims to shift the underlying perspectives communicated in the questions to be more inclusive of Inuit world views. Behavioural questions, which ask candidates to share a real situation where they had to use specific skills, allow the candidate to share *how* they would apply their skills, not *whether* they can.

Reflect on the eight Inuit Societal Values and your own biases. For example, answering a question like “Tell me why I should hire you” could make Inuit candidates uncomfortable as they might feel doing so would be boastful.¹⁴ Instead, consider asking a question like “Do you have a skill you’d like to share that relates to this work?”

As well, run your questions through a plain-language tool to ensure they’re clear and concise. Doing so makes the interview easier for both parties—candidates don’t need to try to interpret what you’re really asking, and you get the information that you’re looking for. Plain language helps build in equity and makes your rubric more objective. Avoid trick questions that aren’t linked to a relevant task or underlying competency.

During the interview

Open the interview by sharing your name, pronouns, and an acknowledgement of the Indigenous territory you’re on. This introduction helps to attract the candidate to your organization.¹⁵ While most interviews begin with some informal conversation, seemingly unbiased topics addressed in this informal period directly influence interview scores and favour candidates who appear professionally sociable. You might want to standardize these rapport-building questions or weigh later interview questions more heavily to ensure earlier question scores aren’t as influential.

Make sure you ask all candidates the same questions, in the same order and with the same rubric to score responses.

For a virtual interview, let the candidate know how they can contact you if their computer freezes or they have Internet issues. Provide a phone number. Paste the questions into the chat so the candidate can read them, especially questions with multiple prompts.

For your last interview question, use an open-ended question that gives the candidate an opportunity to share their skills in their own words. You might say, “Is there anything else you’d like to share with us that we haven’t asked you?” Follow this last question with an opportunity for the candidate to ask you questions.

Close the interview by sharing clear next steps and timelines.

14 Turner, “Bias-Free Hiring.”

15 Swider, Harris, and Barrick, “Should You Chat Informally Before an Interview?”



Where insights meet impact

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