



## Sample Interview Questions

### General Question Ideas

1. Please tell us why you are interested in [this position] for [this organization]. What special qualities, skills and interests you would bring to the position? And why are you interested in working for [this organization]?
2. Give us an example of a project you were responsible for where you were less than satisfied with the results. What did you learn from the experience? What would you do differently now and how would that change the outcome?
3. Please give us some information about your experience making formal presentations in a public setting. Tell us about a particularly volatile situation you've been involved with and how you managed it. What do you think are keys to providing controversial information in a public setting?
4. Hypothetical: A City Council member approaches you as the new [position] with a dynamite idea to [fill in]. You recognize the project is a good idea, but don't believe it is in the current plans. How would you handle this situation?
5. With any new job a new employee discovers that certain portions of the job match very well with existing strengths and other portions present real opportunities for new learning and building new skills. Based upon what you know about the [position], where would you expect to excel and what part of the job would present you more of a challenge?
6. Describe your experience [fill in]. Please be specific as to what your actual tasks and responsibilities were.
7. Hypothetical: You are the new [position]. In one of your first projects for the [organization] you work with a [customer] that is very competent, professional and fun to be around. He seems to also enjoy your company. About a month after completing the project, the customer stops by [the worksite] and asks you to go to a Mariners game with him the following weekend. How would you handle this situation?
8. Tell us about your experience managing a successful [fill in] project. What made the project successful and what role did you play in accomplishing that success?
9. When you think of diversity in a workplace, what comes to mind? What do you think is the value of diversity in the workplace?



10. Hypothetical: You are the new [position]. You have just learned that [problem with the project]. This change will delay the schedule just presented to Council by a year and increase the project budget by 20%. The [fill in] Department's ability to get projects completed on time and within budget is in question already. How would you proceed?
11. Describe your work ethic. What approach do you take to successfully managing a very busy demanding job while maintaining a life outside of work?
12. Hypothetical: You are the new [position]. You are on an interdepartmental project team along with Jane, another employee in your department. At the first couple meetings of the team, you were concerned that Jane was reporting information to the team that seemed inaccurate, but you were unsure. At today's team meeting, Jane reported to the team that your Director was opposed to a proposed action, but you know that the Director is supportive of the action. How would you handle this situation?
13. How do you view the use of teams in the workplace? Do you enjoy working on teams? What do you find most frustrating about working on a team? Name one strength you bring to a team that makes you a good team member.
14. One of the few constants in life is change. How do you approach dealing with change in the workplace?
15. Tell us about your experience in preparing and managing budgets. What do you think are keys to successfully managing a budget in the public sector?
16. Describe your philosophy on providing excellent customer service. What do you believe is the most important quality in delivering excellent customer service?
17. The candidates for this position bring a wide variety of experience and background to their candidacy. Please name the top two subject matter strengths and two personality or "soft skill" strengths you would bring to our job.
18. As the new [position] you would undoubtedly have ideas about changes or new initiatives you might like to bring to the [organization]. Talk to us about a program or initiative you have had a positive experience with. How might that program/initiative potentially be beneficial at [organization]?
19. If we were to gather all of your former supervisors in a room and ask them to come to a consensus about your two greatest professional strengths—what would they tell us? What might they agree is an area for you to work on?
20. What is your favorite part of public service? Why? What is the least favorite? Why?



21. At [organization], we expect all employees to have good word processing and basic computer skills—we are not staffed to have much administrative support in this area. What level of administrative support are you accustomed to? What level of support would you expect in order to be successful as our [position]?
22. Tell us about one of your biggest successes. Why do you consider it significant? What challenges did you overcome to make it successful? How did you celebrate your success?
23. How do you see this position fitting in with your career goals? Where do you see yourself in 3 years? What is your ultimate career goal?
24. Key [organization] Values are [fill in]. What thoughts do you have about these as organizational values? How do you see the [position] contributing to these values?
25. What aspects of your work life has given you the most satisfaction or sense of accomplishment? What do you find frustrating in the work setting?
26. How do you measure your own success? The success of your boss?
27. Describe your ideal boss.
28. What are some qualities you find particularly troublesome in a peer?
29. Describe the “ideal” corporate culture for you to thrive and prosper. Describe a culture you would view as less than ideal.
30. What process have you used to critically evaluate your program’s effectiveness? What was the outcome?
31. One of the [governing board]’s goals is to [fill in goal]. What role do you see the [position] playing in achieving this goal?
32. What is your experience in working with elected officials? What differences, if any, do you think there would be in working in a Council/Manager form of government vs a Strong Mayor or other elected official led government?
33. Give an example of a particularly contentious workplace situation that you have been involved in. What was your role in the situation? What made it particularly contentious? How was the situation resolved?
34. Tell us about a project you have been responsible for managing that involved employees in more than one department. In you explanation, please include the following



information: departments involved, number of employees involved, positions of the employees involved, time frame and goal of the project. What was the outcome of the project? If successful, what made it successful? What did you learn from the project?

## Question Ideas for Management/Supervisory Position

1. What do you think are the keys to a successful [organization] management team? What three qualities would you bring to the team that would improve and strengthen it?
2. Give us an example where your staff did not meet your level of expectation in regards to the work product or timeliness of response to another party. What steps did you take to ensure that the situation did not occur in the future?
3. Hypothetical: You are the new [position]. A [organization] resident/customer is unhappy about [fill in]. Your staff has met with her on several occasions and you have also met with her on this issue. Today you get a voice mail message from the [CMO/Administrator's Office]. A Council member has been contacted by the citizen and is very concerned that [department] staff have not been responsive to this citizen's concerns. How would you handle this situation?
4. How do you recognize employees for good work? What have you found works best to motivate and reward employees?
5. As [position], how would you create opportunities for feedback, both from you to employees and from employees back up to you and the [position's supervisor]?
6. Sometimes there are different points of view within the [organization] about how to manage a project or solve a problem. For example, staff in [dept.] might have a different perspective on a specific issue than staff in [dept.]. As [position], how would you go about building good working relationships with key employees in other operational departments? What expectations would you have of your staff in their relationships with other departments?
7. What is your philosophy and approach to developing employees and creating a work environment where employees can produce their very best work?
8. How do you view the use of teams in the workplace? Are there certain tasks/projects that lend themselves better to team than other tasks/projects? Tell us how you approach forming and using teams.
9. How would you describe your leadership style and values? In your answer, please tell us what you consider to be the optimum leadership style.



10. Hypothetical: You are the new [position] and have been on the job for 3 weeks. A [organization] resident/customer calls the [CMO/Administrator/Director's office] and complains about an issue concerning some of your staff. This issue and these staff have also been the subject of several other complaints over the last six months. The CMO's Office is beginning to suspect there may be a performance problem with the staff involved. How would you handle this situation?
11. Hypothetical: You have been the new [position] for about three months. You have noticed that one of your direct reports has an issue with providing timely responses. He frequently needs to be reminded two or three times that information is due and today you have had a manager in another department come to you with concerns about this employee's lack of timely response to an issue. What approach would you take concerning this situation?
12. As the new [position], how would you go about developing working relationships with [peers in other departments]? With the members of the [fill in] team? With employees in your division?
13. Hypothetical: You have been the new [position] for about six months. You have noticed that whenever you suggest a possible change to one of your direct reports, he always seems resistant. He does not openly say he doesn't want a change, but he often speaks glowingly of his previous supervisor and how well the department has been running. This response is pretty consistent, regardless of the type of change being discussed. How would you handle this situation?
14. How do you approach hiring for a vacant position? Talk about hiring processes that work well and those that work less well. Tell us one thing you believe is a key element of making a good hire and one common mistake that hiring managers make.