

# DCIF Project – Evaluation Tool 5: Conducting Accessible Phone and Virtual Interviews

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## Tags

### Who is this tool for?

High Priority:

- Interviewers

Practical Information:

- Hiring Managers
- Hiring Committee Members

Useful to Know:

- **DEI** and HR Professionals

### What guidance does this tool provide?

- How to plan for and conduct barrier-free phone and virtual interviews

### Take home points:

- Although phone and virtual interview are becoming the new norm, specific considerations still need to be addressed to ensure all applicants have an inclusive and accessible experience
- Keep in mind to be proactive and consistent in communication and scheduling, choosing the right technology to best accommodate applicants, and ensuring distractions and noise are limited

## Phone and Virtual Interviews: Creating a Great Candidate Experience

Phone and virtual interviews are a convenient interview alternative that may help candidates feel more comfortable and enable them to answer questions more naturally. Phone or virtual interviews also provide the flexibility to accommodate a variety of schedules and can remove barriers to access in the physical environment for many candidates.

- ✓ **For example, if a candidate who uses a wheelchair currently has a full-time job in a different city, they may be unable to travel to your workplace for an interview during normal working hours. Virtual interviews can allow you to speak with candidates all over the world. This is especially important if you are looking to hire for remote positions or a position that is not in your home office.**

New changes in the workplace have shown us that holding phone or virtual interviews are an effective means for evaluation, whilst keeping yourself, your employees, and candidate safe. It is important to keep in mind that candidates may still prefer to participate in interviews remotely. Disability confident employers will continue offering flexibility with their interviewing approaches to promote accessibility and inclusivity at their workplace.

### Specific Considerations for Conducting Virtual Interviews<sup>1</sup>

#### Determine the date and time

- Reach out to schedule a date and time for the interview and be flexible
- Keep in mind that some applicants may prefer morning or afternoon timeslots only, depending on their disability
- Cap interviews at one hour, or ask the applicant whether exceeding one hour is accessible to them
- Recognize that long meetings can be a barrier to many people with disabilities, such as persons with chronic pain or **neurodiverse** individuals

#### Send an invitation

- Confirm the interview by sending a calendar invitation, which includes the date and time that the interview will be held, and all the information needed to access the software you'll use for the interview
- Be very clear about the format of the virtual video interview, so candidates know what is expected of them
- If the candidate will need an access code to log in to the interview, list this information in a prominent place in the email
- Include how long you anticipate the interview lasting and add any additional documentation or information you want the candidate to have on hand during the interview

For more information about virtual meeting, please visit [Communication Tool 4 - Hosting Inclusive Virtual Meetings](#)

#### Choose the right technology

- Ensure all accessibility features are turned on for any platform your business chooses to use
- For instance, on Zoom, live **closed captioning** on the host's account must be enabled in order for a meeting attendee to be able to turn it on
- Perform a practice interview with a colleague to ensure your technology is working

### Limit your distractions

- Chose a space that is clean, quiet, and well-lit for your interviews
- Turn off all ringers, instant messaging, and other notifications to limit any distractions
- Set up your computer in a location with a neutral background
- Wear neutral and solid colour clothing, as patterns can sometimes be distracting
- Ensure that your face is well illuminated for any applicant who may lip read or interpret facial cues

### Test your internet connection

- To prevent any mishaps, and to ensure that you can hear all of the candidate's responses, test your connection before the interview
- Make sure your microphone and webcam are functioning correctly
- Send a message to candidate's preferred communication method (i.e., phone, text, email, etc.) 2-5 minutes prior to calling, to give them an advanced notice to expect your video call

*Pop Up: There is often an unintentional delay in the audio, and therefore it may take the candidate a little longer to respond to your questions. Similarly, **American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters and Communication Access Realtime Translation Services (CART)** may experience unintentional delay. Be patient and work together.*

### Put your candidates at ease

- Try to alleviate their concerns by introducing yourself and your co-interviewers, your roles, and the workplace culture at the organization
- Review what candidates should expect in the interview process
- Emphasize that should they have any questions or concerns; they can voice them at any time
- Remind the candidate that you have sent them the questions via email, maintain eye contact with the candidate, and to speak clearly and slowly so that they can follow along
- Provide the option to candidates to join without camera, and just audio

Sidebar: Put yourself in the shoes of the candidate. There are many reasons for why they may be nervous or stressed during an interview. For instance, candidates may:

- Be unfamiliar with teleconferencing technology
- Be uncomfortable on camera
- Experience heightened anxiety, stress, or disability-related triggers such as seizures, tics and/or symptoms during the interview
- Be experiencing additional stress resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic that may impact their engagement with you and the panel during their interview(s)

If you notice that the candidate is distressed, ask them what you can do to support them.

### Maintain communication

- Once you have concluded the interview, send a quick thank you message via the messenger function of the application or through email
- Let the candidate know that you will contact them when a decision has been made
- Provide as clear of a timeline as possible

## Specific Considerations for Conducting Phone Interviews

Ensure phone interviews do not run for more than 20-30 minutes.

Remember, phone interviews are a great way to determine which candidates you would like to continue in your process. Keep it light and informative, be mindful that there might be unforeseen interruptions during the phone call, which should not elicit implicit beliefs of unprofessionalism or unpreparedness on the candidate; the next stages will allow you to dive deeper into the candidate's experiences.

Start all phone calls with a brief overview of the role.

By reviewing key highlights about the team/department's culture, employers can focus on the value proposition – why should the candidate want to work for you and your business. It also provides candidates the opportunity to interview you and learn from you.

Ask why they are interested.

Phone interviews are a great opportunity to ask the candidates why they are interested in the role. This can provide insight into whether the candidate has done any preliminary research and is able to speak to their alignment to the role or your team's culture.

Try not to solely focus on their (past) experience and educational achievements.

These questions do not always indicate future success or suitability for the role. Instead, ask the candidates three to four questions about the skills they have gained throughout their career, placement opportunities and volunteer experiences, and how they believe they can utilize/transfer them to the role you are recruiting for. Note – this will give you invaluable insight into their future potential.

Utilize this moment for transparency.

A phone interview gives you an opportunity to have a transparent conversation with the candidate about salary expectations, overall recruitment process/timeline, and to give the candidate an opportunity ask you questions about your business. It is highly recommended that you speak to the candidates about your available salary range – both the starting range and specific to the position you are hiring for. Some candidates may bow out of the process if their expectations do not align with your budget.

## References

<sup>1</sup> University of British Columbia (2020). *Equity Considerations in Virtual Interviews*. UBC Equity and Inclusion Office. <https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/equity-considerations-in-virtual-interviews/>