

99 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

to Ask Public Sector Candidates

Are you still asking the same interview questions as 10 years ago? We asked hundreds of public sector HR professionals to share their favorite interview questions they use to gain better insights into candidates and determine whether someone is the right fit for the position. Here are some of the best ones:

WHAT...

1. What did you do to prepare for this interview?
2. What do you expect from your team or coworkers?
3. What was the best idea you pitched to your boss that was rejected, and what did you learn from it?
4. What do you need from us to help you grow?
5. What does diversity and inclusion mean to you and how do you support it?
6. What is the best thing you learned from a mistake that you made?
7. What advice do you have for your previous boss?
8. What would your current supervisor say are your strengths and weaknesses?
9. What is something you did in your professional experience that you are most proud of and why?
10. What haven't we asked you that you want us to know?
11. What would I find on your night stand or coffee table?
12. What is our mission statement and what does it mean to you?
13. What is an important value for your department to embody?
14. What do you think you will enjoy most about this position and what will you least enjoy?
15. What would a billboard about you look like?
16. What is one of your hobbies and how does it fulfill you?
17. What do you feel you can contribute to this organization?
18. What interests you in public service?
19. What do you do that annoys your coworkers?
20. What do you like to do for fun?
21. What motivates you?
22. What do you want to be when you grow up?
23. What's something not on your resume that you are proud of?
24. What makes you the best candidate for this position?
25. What is your favorite type of team building activity?
26. What's your greatest professional failure and what did you learn from it?
27. What would your current or most recent supervisor say is your best asset as an employee?
28. What is your greatest accomplishment?
29. What do you do to gain trust?
30. What is the most difficult decision you have had to make in the last 6 months?
31. What is the last book you read?
32. What management style do you work best with and why?
33. What was the last coaching tip you received?
34. What do you bring to this position that no one else can?
35. What would your subordinates or peers say about your work ethic?
36. What would your walk-in song be?
37. What is your passion and how would you use it in your job?
38. What are your top 3 work values and why?
39. What are the best opportunities for growth and development?
40. What strengths would you bring to this position, if you were hired?
41. What makes you the best candidate for this job?
42. What other talents outside of your resume will be an asset to our organization?
43. What is your ideal workplace culture? What's working and what needs improvement in your current culture?
44. What has been the most helpful constructive criticism you have received? How did you respond to it?
45. What companies have you worked for that have continuously changed their policies and procedures? Please share some of these changes and how you reacted.
46. What is your Hogwarts house and why?

WHO...

47. Who is your favorite superhero and why?
48. Who do you admire and why?

WHY...

49. Why do you think integrity is important in a job, especially in the department for which you're interviewing?
50. Why do you want to work for this organization?

HOW...

51. How would you participate in or guide our workplace culture?
52. How do you deal with difficult people?
53. How many years do you believe will be necessary to accomplish your career goals?
54. How would you incorporate equity and social justice into your role?
55. How does this position align with your long term goals?
56. How have you positively influenced a coworker?
57. How do you approach a tough situation?
58. How would you deal with a bad coworker?
59. How would your co-workers describe you? How about your friends?
60. How do you handle stress? What does stressed out look like on you?
61. How do you attract top talent and keep them in your organization?
62. How do you like to be managed?
63. How do you stay on track with continually changing priorities?
64. How long does it take you to reach out for help when you don't know how to approach something?
65. How would your children, siblings, or parents describe you?
66. How do you prioritize your time in order to meet deadlines?
67. How has your education and experience prepared you for this role?
68. How would you describe yourself in one word?

IF...

69. If you were an animal, what would you be?
70. If you were hosting a dinner party, what would your kitchen look like at serving time?
71. If you could bring one thing to a potluck, what would it be?
72. If you could change one thing about how you approach tasks, what would it be?
73. If you were not offered this role, what do you think the reason would be?
74. If you could enjoy a coffee at Starbucks with anyone, dead or alive, who would it be?
75. If you don't get this job, what's your back-up plan?
76. If you have a problem to solve and no team members or management are there to assist you, what are two ways you would go about solving the problem?
77. If you could buy one skill you don't possess, what would it be?
78. If there was someone more qualified for this position, what skills would they possess that you do not?

TELL ME...

79. Tell me about the last place where you received excellent customer service. What was excellent about it?
80. Tell us about a time when public service impacted you. What did it mean to you?
81. Tell us about a time that your integrity was tested. What was the outcome?
82. Tell me the greatest impact you had on your team.
83. Tell me about a time that you were given feedback that was hard to hear.
84. Tell me about a time when you met an obstacle and overcame it.
85. Tell me about a time when there was a conflict you had to deal with and how you handled it. In hindsight, how might you have handled it differently?
86. Tell me about a time when you recommended or implemented an innovative initiative or process. What did you recommend or implement? What did it improve?
87. Tell me about your cell phone.
88. Tell me the most interesting thing that has happened to you recently.
89. Tell me about your favorite/best mentor. What are you doing to follow in their footsteps?
90. Tell me three things you'd want to do or have in your ideal job. Why?
91. Tell me a little bit about yourself from the perspective of your last boss.
92. Tell me what a typical work day looks like for you.
93. Tell me about a time when public service impacted you. What did it mean to you?
94. Tell me about a time when you faced a challenging situation and got your team together to solve it.
95. Tell me about the work project you are most proud of.
96. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an irate citizen. How did you deal with the situation?
97. Tell me about a time you disagreed with your boss. How did you handle it?
98. Tell me about a situation that went from negative to positive and describe the skills and leadership qualities you used.
99. Tell me about specific actions you have taken to promote and maintain effective work relationships with your team members.