This information helps organizations navigate recruitment questions related to novel coronavirus (COVID-19). We hope this resource helps you make sound decisions in the workplace. This guidance applies to general government employers. Higher education employers may choose to follow this guidance.

Please note: We will adjust these guidelines as we learn more about the spread and impacts of the virus.

COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, and it may impact your hiring landscape. If your agency is in the midst of a hiring crunch, this could be a difficult time to navigate interviewing and meeting new candidates.

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Continuing with active recruitments
To help ensure the health and safety of your team members and job candidates, we offer the following guidance regarding your agency hiring process:

As an alternative to in-person interviews, please consider offering an online option to candidates. WebEx, Zoom or Skype are all resources available free of charge for state of Washington employees and agencies. For candidates who do not have access to a computer with a camera, consider using a conference phone line to conduct the interview by phone.

Offer flexibility if candidates need to reschedule. With school and childcare closures and individual family care needs, there is a high likelihood some candidates will be unable to participate in an interview, virtual or in-person. During this time, hiring managers may need to accommodate candidate schedules so as not to prohibit any applicant from consideration due to circumstances beyond their control.

Let candidates know what they can expect during your hiring process, from interviews to onboarding. Be open about what’s changed because of the virus. Review at your post-application communications and any content you have on your recruitment web site that describes your hiring process.

Suspending or freezing recruitment activities
In facing this crisis some agencies may implement a hiring freeze -- no new hires will be made until the freeze has been lifted. Other agencies may put a hiring delay in place until things calm down and general concern over crisis has subsided.
Rather than stopping hiring altogether, we suggest agencies should continue their active talent search. As mentioned above, the assessment/interview process can be conducted via video conferencing or phone, but wait to bring the job candidate into the office.

If you determine that final interviews should only be conducted in-person, you can always delay them and have your recruitment team continue to build your candidate pipeline for when you are ready to resume. If you determine a delay cannot happen, we recommend that the social distancing protocols from the Washington State Department of Health be followed during an in-person interview (don’t shake hands, sit 6 feet apart, etc.). Check the DOH recommendations frequently as guidance could change. Careful consideration should be made to those who are at higher risk of getting sick from COVID-19 (listed in CDC guidelines).

Regardless of the avenue your agency takes, the key is to remain transparent and communicate to all parties involved. In the current environment, transparency and communication are really important; not just to employees but also to prospective candidates.

### Candidate FAQs about hiring during COVID-19

In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, you will likely get questions from potential or future candidates. Feel free to use some of the below FAQs as response templates.

**Are state agencies still hiring?**

Yes, most remain open (some in limited capacity) and are actively recruiting and assessing either in-house or remotely.

**Are job interviews happening in-person or online?**

The hiring authority and agency recruitment teams are responsible for coordinating interviews, but in general, first interviews are usually by phone with follow-up interviews in-person. Under current circumstances, it is recommended that all interviews be conducted by phone or video conference. If an agency elects to have an in-person interview, we recommend that the social distancing protocols from the Washington State Department of Health be strictly followed during an in-person interview (don’t shake hands, sit 6 feet apart, etc.). If you have an in-person interview scheduled with an agency and would like to request a remote interview, please contact the hiring authority or recruitment team to determine what options are available.

**What if I don’t feel well on the day of my in-person interview?**

If you are sick on the day of your interview, please contact the hiring authority or associated recruitment team to reschedule.

**Are the positions you are currently hiring for required to work on-site or can I work from home?**

During the COVID-19 outbreak, telework is highly encouraged and supported for positions with duties that can be accomplished remotely. However, some state agency staff positions require you to be on-site.

### Preparing for a remote interview

Consider sharing the following guidance with your hiring managers and candidates to help them be successful when navigating a remote interview.
Advice for the **hiring manager**

- **Be prepared** — As with any interview, familiarize yourself and other interviewers with the candidate’s resume and the job description to give the virtual interview the formality of an in-person one. Likewise, keep the candidate informed on who they’ll be interviewing with so they can prepare questions of their own. And, of course, make sure whatever technology you are using is working properly.

- **Communicate openly** — Keep candidates well-informed at each stage of the interview process. Without being able to give them a warm, in-person reception, it’s especially important to show them their time and efforts are valued.

- **Remove distractions** — Be respectful to the candidate and position yourself away from distractions, including your cell phone, as you would in an in-person interview.

- **Reinforce employer brand** — Ensure interviewers at all stages of the recruitment process convey a consistent message about your agency’s mission and values.

- **Give the candidate time** — Pause to ensure the candidate is done with their response, before moving onto the next question to account for time lags and lack of usual social cues.

Advice for the **candidates**

- **Test your technology(s)** — Make sure your internet connection and video conferencing program are both working well prior to your interview.

- **Dress appropriately (if video conferencing)** — Dressing for success is no less important for remote interviews. Dress smartly, like you would for an in-person interview, and ensure your surroundings are tidy.

- **Be prepared** — Do your homework just as you would for any other interview, rehearsing your responses to key interview questions and preparing your own questions for the interviewer.

- **Be personable** — Make eye-contact and generally engage with the interviewer to demonstrate your enthusiasm for the role (if video teleconferencing).

- **Remove distractions** — Ensure you’re fully engaged with the interviewer by removing all distractions, including your cell phone.

- **Follow-up** — Send a follow-up note to your interviewer, thanking them for their time.

Learn more about the state of Washington’s COVID-19 response

- **2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak (Department of Health)** — Information specific to Washington, updates about confirmed cases and numbers under supervision, FAQs and more.

- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) - HR guidance for state agencies (OFM State Human Resources)** — Information for state organizations to prepare for and respond to issues and questions related to novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

- **Thurston County coronavirus information (Thurston County Public Health and Social Services)** — Current situation updates, news releases and local information.

- **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)** — Read about how the CDC is responding to the outbreak at the national level, how the virus spreads, symptoms, situation updates, etc.

- **Public Health Insider recommendations to slow the spread of coronavirus** — Guidance for people at higher risk, tips to reduce close contact, what everyone can do to help keep our community strong and more.

- **Coronavirus disease myth busters (World Health Organization)** — COVID-19 myths debunked and advice for the public.