

SHIFTING POWER DYNAMICS IN THE HIRING PROCESS



At IONS we recognize that the hiring process often privileges white, able-bodied, neurotypical people who can conform to Eurocentric ways of working and being. We recognize the inherent power dynamic within the capitalist hiring process which weighs heavily in favour of the organization. In keeping with our equity and justice commitments and recognizing that the hiring process is relational work, we're consciously iterating new ways of approaching how we do this. There are many ways that employers can do this, and we've outlined some actions, resources, and reflections to help.

Small changes are better than no changes at all

Through feedback from new staff, furthering our education and learning from others we continue to adapt and evolve our process. Working to share even more information and features of our workspace than we have done so in the past. So that those considering joining IONS have all the information they need (without having to ask for it) to be able to make the decision if they believe this can be a workplace where they can thrive.

QUICK WINS

- ✔ Provide a high level "What to Expect" distilling your hiring process down into 3-4 steps for transparency.
- ✔ Provide multiple time options for interviews and allow candidates to select which works for them.
- ✔ Provide the salary range in the job brief.
- ✔ Offer virtual interviews as well as in-person interviews.
- ✔ Offer reverse-reference checks for job candidates.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE JOB AND PROCESS

Providing a high level of details for an applicant to know what to expect is key in shifting those power dynamics and setting expectations throughout the process. Below are some items you should consider including within job descriptions and external communications ([Example: IONS job posting here](#)).

WHAT TO INCLUDE: JOB DESCRIPTION

- Salary range: sharing this in the job posting is the first step to pay transparency and gives people the expectation of compensation for the role.
- Working hours per week
- Health Benefits: If comprehensive health and dental benefits are provided and the employer/employee contributions.
- Annual vacation allotment: Provide the exact amount of vacation days employees are entitled to per year.
- Additional Paid Time Off: Include any extra days whether for cultural events, office closures during colonial holidays, etc.
- Sick leave: How many days are provided paid and/or unpaid.
- Remote or hybrid working options.
- Whether technology and equipment is provided.

WHAT TO INCLUDE: JOB PROCESS

- Timeline of the process
- When candidates can expect to be contacted
- How many interviews are part of the process
- Structure of the interview and whether virtual options are offered
- If there's any additional work required
- What accommodations are available, or where applicants can request accommodations.
- Whether an honorarium is provided and to whom.

Resource/Example

This is taken right from IONS hiring postings.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:

- Once you apply through the form, you'll receive an automated confirmation email. The IONS team will then review all applications to determine who we would like to learn more about. As this is relational work, every applicant will receive an email whether you've been selected to move forward for an interview or not.
- Initial interviews will be held virtually via Zoom or in person at our Halifax office depending on location, availability, and accessibility for the candidate(s).
- We understand the stress and anxiety of these processes so we will send a copy of the interview questions to everyone in advance of our conversation. Heads up – we may reach out for a second round!
- We recognize that creating an application and preparing for an interview is unpaid labour so a \$50 honorarium will be offered to everyone who participates in the interview process.

INVITING PEOPLE TO THE INTERVIEW

An effective way that organizations can address power imbalances in the hiring process is by acknowledging the humanity of candidates throughout the process. Research indicates that the majority of job applicants are already employed either full-time or part-time, thus managing existing work commitments alongside the interview process. Here are some tips and approaches you can implement:

Intention: Engaging candidates in decision-making processes and creating a more inclusive and intentional interview process that recognizes the needs and preferences of candidates.

PROVIDE AN HONORARIUM FOR INTERVIEWEES

At IONS, we recognize that creating an application and preparing for an interview is often unpaid labour. A \$50 honorarium is offered to everyone who participates in the interview process. Since we typically only offer interviews during our workplace hours, we hope the honorarium demonstrates our commitment to our values and a candidate's ability to participate in the process.

Determining the size of honorarium may be based on the type of labour involved in the interview process. While we recommend against requesting the creation of new work materials, mini projects, and presentations, if this was something necessary for the applicant to do a larger honorarium should be added to recognize the labour.

Things not to do: Avoid asking for additional free work for the interview process (i.e., skills test, writing samples, presentations, etc.) if no honorarium is offered.

SCHEDULING INTERVIEWEES

- Provide multiple time slots for interviews, enabling candidates to select a time that fits their schedule. Tools like StrawPoll, Calendly, or Doodle can help facilitate and streamline scheduling.
- Offer both in-person and virtual interview options, allowing candidates to select the format that best suits their needs.
 - For virtual interviews, provide a selection of online platforms such as Zoom or Teams. If required, offer technical support or resources on how to use the suggested platform effectively.
 - For in-person interviews, provide detailed directions to the office location and information about the physical space, including accessible entrances and doorways. This gives candidates an overview of what to expect and allows them to request any necessary accommodations.

SHARING FEATURES OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

This is an important accessibility feature that will allow folks in the hiring process to decide if this is a place in which they can thrive regarding the physical office space. Features to consider sharing are. If you have a physical office space consider sharing text and images of:

- Physical features of the entry way(s): how many steps, if there is a ramp, are there automatic doors or not, door stoppers, or barrier free entrances located in a different location than the main doors.
- Directions for physically getting to the space (Bus routes, parking options (if any), street parking details (how much it costs and how long they can park for) can you include a map that highlights these options?

Additionally, you could consider:

- Adding a photo to your job description of the workspace and location
- Adding an image to your contact us page that shows what the entrance to the space looks like
- Update your Google Business listing to include up images of the entrance and external features.
- Creating a “Space Access Guide” that could be on your website, email signature, or shared when inviting anyone to your physical office space.
- Example Access Guide: [Crippling the Arts](#)

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Intention: Providing information and transparency about the interview process, location, people, questions, etc. allows for a more fulsome and authentic conversation. This can all be collected in a document or “[Interview Package](#)” and sent to the candidates prior to the interview. We aim for 48 hours in advance.



PROVIDE DETAILS ABOUT INTERVIEWERS

Intention: To humanize the process. Allowing interviewees the ability to also know information about the folks that will be on the call for their interview. This can help to put interviewees at ease, and have it be less one sided in terms of who knows each other. This adds more of a personal aspect to the interviews and allows for power to be shared in these conversations. This could look like:

- A link to your websites “Team” page directing them to the interviewing members.
- A LinkedIn URL to the interviewers
- A little write up like the below:

In Conversation With

For this interview you will be meeting with two of the IONS Team – we’ve provided some information about ourselves below so that you can get to know us a little since we got to get to know you before the interview too.

 <p>Lydia Phillip Communications Manager (aka – The Pyrotechnician)</p> <p>Meet Lydia!</p> <p>My Favourite IONS Content: I love that I get to create content that aligns with my values as well as the organization’s! I’m really proud of my most recent piece, Resisting a Rest, about how urgency culture upholds colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy – and how it shows up in our work and what we can do about it. Do you ever create a thing and you’re like, “Yup that’s magic”? This IONS blog is one of those for me. :)</p> <p>The book I will recommend a million times over: Hmm this is tough because there’s so many books that I’ve gotten so much out of. But if I catch wind that you’re even a little bit of a reader, I will for sure be telling you to read “Hench” by Natalie Zina Walschots.</p>	 <p>Alexandra Theroux Operations Manager (aka – Maker of Magic)</p> <p>Meet Alexandra!</p> <p>My Favourite IONS Content: There’s a lot coming up that I’m really proud of and excited for but of the recently published works that I’ve done for our IONS communications, this blog on Art for Impact (co-written with my Interview partner) stands out for me since it combined my love of creativity with my desire to make change.</p> <p>My Favourite Book of 2022 (so far): I am a GIANT bookworm (understatement) so this question always hard but the book I’ve recommended the most this year is <i>The House in the Cerulean Sea</i> by TJ Klune – I’ve read so many more of his books this year but this was my first and it is the most wholesome bit of magic you’ll ever read.</p>
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Add text that relates. You can make it fun and relevant.

PROVIDE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN ADVANCE

Intention: Providing interview questions in advance fosters a more equitable and transparent hiring process, benefiting both the organization and the diverse pool of candidates.

- Sharing interview questions in advance can significantly benefit both the organization and the candidates. It represents a simple yet impactful adjustment that organizations can make with minimal effort. By providing interviewees with the questions ahead of time, they are given the opportunity to prepare thoroughly, ensuring they can present themselves in the best possible light during the interview. This preparation allows candidates to anticipate and craft thoughtful responses to both straightforward and complex questions, ultimately enhancing the quality of the interaction and providing a fairer assessment of their abilities.
- Sharing interview questions in advance serves as an important accessibility tool, particularly for candidates whose first language is not English, those who are disabled, neurodivergent, anxious, etc. By offering the questions beforehand, organizations create a more inclusive environment, enabling candidates to translate complex language into simpler terms and formulate well-considered responses.

Things not to do: Avoid asking unrelated, tricky questions. These types of questions and our expectations of a “good” response is often ableist and unnecessarily difficult.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

GIVE SPACE FOR CANDIDATE QUESTIONS ABOUT TEAM AND CULTURE

Intention: Carving out time during the interview to encourage candidates to ask the hard questions about the organizations helps shift power dynamics. At IONS, we say “It’s important that you want to choose IONS as an employer, we encourage you to ask the questions that help guide your decision.”

Here’s some examples of questions that could be asked (or encouraged to be asked) by those interviewing for a new position:

- How does your organization support racialized people in the workplace?
- How does your organization support people with different identities, abilities, and neurotypes?
- How does your organization handle conflict and tension in the workplace?
- What are your leave policies? How do staff use them and feel about using them?
- What are your commitments to justice and equity? How do you practice them in the workplace and external work?
- How does your organization receive and respond to feedback?
- Is there a probation period? If so, how does it work.
- Is there anything about my resume that you have concerns about that I can address on the call/ interview?

OFFERING REVERSE REFERENCES

Traditional reference checks have become a standard in the hiring process across sectors. Employers typically conduct reference checks to gather insights into a candidate's past performance, work ethic, and suitability for a position. Incorporating reverse reference checks into the hiring process can contribute to creating a more inclusive, transparent, and mutually beneficial workplace environment.

A reverse reference check involves seeking feedback on either the direct supervisor, team lead, or organization from the prospective employee. It typically involves the supervisor providing a list of “references” of people who they have directly supervised or worked collaboratively with. This approach allows candidates to gain deeper insights into the organization's culture, team dynamics, managerial and leadership style, and work environment. Consequently, candidates can make more informed decisions about whether to proceed with the application process.

Benefits to the employer:

- Enhances transparency and trust in the hiring process.
- Strengthens the employer brand as an inclusive and employee-centric organization.
- Facilitates better cultural fit and alignment with company values.
- Reduces turnover by ensuring candidates are well-informed about the work environment.
- Improves overall hiring efficiency by avoiding potential mismatches early on.

Examples questions that candidates could ask about a potential employer/ direct supervisor during a reverse reference check:

- From your perspective, how would you describe [the individual]? And how would the team describe [the individual]?
- How would you describe the management style, working style, and communication approach of [the individual]?
- Based on your interactions with [the individual], how do they typically receive feedback or suggestions from their colleagues?
- In your experience, how does [the individual] react to setbacks or failures? How do they handle challenges or conflicts within the team or the organization?
- From your perspective, which values or principles do you think [the individual] prioritizes in their leadership style, and how do these align with the team's values?

IN SUMMARY

Transparency of information and process starts to build trust between an organization, potential candidates, and the community. Some simple adjustments and additions to the process can have a positive impact on your team and future team members.

QUICK LINKS

- [Beyond Decent Work Campaign](#)
- [Example Access Guide](#)
- [IONS Interview Package Example](#)
- [IONS Blog: Reimagining the Traditional Interview](#)
- [IONS Sector Job Board \(Free posting\)](#)
- [Example: IONS Digital Job Posting Promotion](#)