

A large, hollow outline of the state of Mississippi is centered on the page. The outline is black and follows the state's irregular shape, including the Gulf of Mexico coastline.

# **Behavioral Interviewing Guide**

A publication of the  
**Mississippi State  
Personnel Board**

August, 2002

Authored by:  
**Amy D. Whitten, J.D.**  
**The Whitten Group. P. A.**  
**Post Office Box 12707**  
**Jackson, MS 39236-2707**  
**[information@thewhittengroup.com](mailto:information@thewhittengroup.com)**

# Table of Contents

Overview of Competencies.....	2
Behavioral Based Interviews.....	4
Guide to Planning and Conducting a Good Behavioral Interview.....	5
Behavioral Interview Questions.....	8
Assessing Candidates .....	21

## Appendices

I. Public Sector Competencies.....	23
II.Management Competencies.....	27
III.Competency Assessment Worksheet.....	32
IV.Technical Competency Worksheet.....	34

## Author's Note

This manual is designed to provide information on behavioral interviewing, a technique supportive of competency based hiring practices. It is not designed to address fundamental issues of legality of interviewing or to replace the advice of agency counsel concerning the propriety of questions in particular cases. Questions used in the interview process must be job related. Interviewers should consult with legal counsel to avoid discriminatory inquiries.

The reader is advised to seek counsel from agency attorneys or human resource professionals before relying on or utilizing the information contained in this manual. Overriding questions concerning job interviewing for positions governed by the State Personnel Board should be sought from the Board's attorney. Further information on the state's laws with regard to employee selection is available from the following:

State Personnel Board  
Office of Legal Counsel  
301 North Lamar Street  
Suite 100  
Jackson, MS 39205  
601.352.1406

# Overview of Competencies

The Mississippi State Personnel Board is utilizing a competency model as part of its Quality Workforce Initiative (QWI). Competencies and behavioral anchors will be integrated into job descriptions for every state job description. The following is a brief overview of the competency model concept.

A **competency** is a skill, trait or behavior that leads to a desired, superior performance result. A **competency model** defines the core competencies associated with outstanding performers and links the culture of an organization to job performance. A competency model attempts to clarify the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that make for successful performance in any job. The value of the model comes from the definition of each competency and its' behavioral examples.

In the Personnel Board's model, competencies are aggregated into three areas – public service, management, and technical. Upon validation, the competencies will be prominently displayed in each job description with a clear identification of their role in employee performance in that position. **Public Service Competencies** are those competencies desired in every state employee. Integrity, service orientation, and accountability would be examples of such competencies. **Management Competencies** are assigned to various management and supervisory job classes and include areas such as working through others and results orientation. **Technical competencies** are job or job class specific and will be melded into Mississippi's job descriptions through traditional subject matter validation whereby subject matter experts define the technical competencies for each job class.

Within each competency family, a number of **behavioral anchors** specifically define

how a competency is exhibited through behavior. In hiring employees, these anchors offer the interviewer greater focus in questioning and afford the candidate a clear understanding of the type behaviors he or she will be required to demonstrate.

The State Personnel Board has identified core public service and management competencies through the use of task forces. *(Those competencies identified by these groups appear in this manual as Appendices I and II.)* The technical competencies will be defined over time and integrated into the state's 2000 plus job classes.

The definition of performance competencies enriches the employment experience in a number of ways. It affords job incumbents and new employees the opportunity to visualize what is expected of them, to assess themselves against an ideal model, and to develop a plan of action that will help to reduce the gap between current performance and ideal performance. Equal value is afforded the employer in the areas of employee selection, development, evaluation, and performance improvement. Competencies form a more accurate vocabulary for conveying an organization's expectations to its employees. They further offer the employee a clear picture of a career path based on performance.

One of the best reasons to adopt the competency model is because it makes use of the top or best performers in an organization. It makes more concrete what the top performers already know, and helps develop a model for personal and professional development that can be easily used by other levels of performers to reach higher levels of performance (LeBleu & Sobkowiak, 1995).

# Competencies and Behavioral Interviews

The concept behind behavioral interviews is that your past performance is the best predictor of future performance. Interviewers ask for specific examples of specific events (including events with both positive and negative outcomes) in order to draw a conclusion as to how a candidate would perform in a similar situation in their organization. Many experts believe that behavioral interviews offer the best opportunity for candidates to showcase their accomplishments and for interviewers to hire the best individual for the job (Grosse 2002). Behavioral interview questions give the interviewer the opportunity to determine whether or not candidates have previously demonstrated the competencies required for the job.

Behavioral interviewing also affords an organization the opportunity to make core competencies visible in the hiring spectrum as they define the areas of questioning. In sum, the identification of competencies leads to the identification of relevant behavioral anchors, which in turn spawn useful behavioral interview questions.

# Guide to Planning and Conducting a Good Behavioral Interview

## Before the interview:

- Have a well-written job description which focuses on the competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) required to excel in the open position
- Utilize a well constructed job content questionnaire (JCQ) to further define the competencies currently required in the job
- Review the job description and JCQ to clarify the most important competencies required of the position. Select the behavioral interview questions (examples are in the behavioral interview questions section) that will address the most important competencies required for the job. Structure and outline these questions. Make planned questions consistent, objective, and job-related
- Ask yourself what signals on an application or resume' will indicate the candidate possesses those competencies, and what signals will indicate the candidate may not possess those competencies. Organize your thoughts in regard to these questions
- Send out a packet to the final interview candidates, containing information concerning the agency, the job, and the interview structure (individual, group, board/panel), time, etc.
- Plan the interview (*forms provided in Appendices III and IV are useful in this phase*):
  - Behavioral based interview questions should make up around 70% of the total interview. The other 30% should be distributed as follows: putting the candidate at ease, opening the interview 10%, explaining the organization's core culture 10%, answering the candidate's questions 5%, wrapping up and next steps 5% (Grosse 2002)
- Plan to use more than one interviewer, especially in final round interviews. Take action to assure that the interview teams are diverse and reflect the culture of the agency
- Train interviewers on legal and effective interviewing practices

- Involve the Human Resources Department to the extent possible
- Select behavioral questions. Do not over-select. Utilization of too many questions will weaken the interview
- Identify “best” and “worst” answer elements. The interview team should discuss the elements of answers that will indicate a high exhibition of the competency versus those elements which indicate a very low exhibition of the competency. Determining ideal and unacceptable responses will promote objective measurement of each candidate
- Set definite questions which target the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the technical aspects of the job

### **During the interview:**

- Use only job-related questions
- Stay clear of vague “tell me about yourself” questions
- Schedule sufficient time for a meaningful exchange
- Where possible, use physical work samples to describe duties
- Practice the “20/80” rule which seeks 20% talk by the interviewer and 80% talk by the applicant through the use of behavioral questions.
- Stress the most important job duties
- Anticipate questions and provide concise information on benefits and other important organizational policies
- Stay clear of discriminatory areas of questioning (*seek approval of questions from HR or the agency’s employment lawyer in advance*)
- Practice good listening/observation skills
- Assign the task of note taking to a member of the team who is skilled and is a good listener

- Take careful notes but avoid non-job related notes or personal notations about the candidate
- Consider structuring final interviews so that the candidate spends time in with different people in different settings

**After the interview:**

- Use job related criteria to differentiate candidates
- Review the interview notes
- Counsel with other “stakeholders” and interviewers
- Check references and conduct supplemental background checks
- Evaluate candidates by consistent and objective job-related standards
- Be able to articulate job based reasons for or against hiring
- Maintain a good record of interview process

# Behavioral Interview Questions

The following list of questions serves as a menu from which you can make choices according to your specific needs. Public Sector Competencies and Management Competencies, as developed by the State Personnel Board's Competency Task Forces and inserted into revised job descriptions, are represented in these questions. Technical competencies should be identified from the job description and questions developed in the same manner. *(A worksheet for use in developing technical competencies is provided in Appendix IV)*

The following lists do not constitute exhaustive questions relating to the established competencies. Good additional behavioral questions may be developed through analysis of the competency language in the job description.

## **Public Sector Competencies**

### **Integrity and Honesty**

Have you ever worked for a public organization? If so, tell me why that agency exists? How does it serve the public?

Tell me about a situation when you were asked to do something that you thought was a conflict of interest. How did you deal with the situation?

You notice a co-worker is taking the sweetener packets out of the break room at work for his/her personal use at home. What do you do?

### **Work Ethic**

Tell me about a last minute assignment that put you under a short deadline. How did you accomplish the task on time? How accurate was your end result?

After being given an assignment, how do you prepare to "tackle" the assignment?

Tell me about a time that you exceeded a co-worker or boss' expectations. It is thirty minutes before the end of the official work day. You have just finished a large project. What do you do in those last thirty minutes of the day?

Tell me about a time when you were asked to complete a task that you didn't know anything about. How did you complete the task?

Describe a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.

You have a co-worker who is on a deadline for a project. It is almost five o'clock and you are ready to walk out the door. The co-worker asks you to stay and help her finish up her project. How do you react?

Tell me about the most challenging task you have ever been faced with. What did you do to meet that challenge?

## **Service Orientation**

Tell me about a time when you exceeded a customer's expectations. How did it make the customer feel? How did it make you feel?

Tell me about a time that you had to go out of your immediate network/job duties to help a customer.

Tell me about the worst customer you ever had and how you dealt with him/her.

Tell me about a time that a customer came to you angry (not necessarily at you) and how you worked with that customer to solve the issue.

Describe the steps you would take if a customer came to you with a problem you could solve at your job level.

Describe the steps you would take if a customer came to you with a problem that was beyond your knowledge and/or responsibilities.

Why is follow-up important in customer service?

A customer comes in with a small request. The small request is not a priority for you but you realize that they have the potential to use your services extensively in the future. How do you ensure that the customer has a good experience and will want to come back to you in the future?

Describe a situation where you were given exceptional customer service. What made it stand out?

Give me an example of when you were given special recognition or acknowledgement for going the extra mile to satisfy a customer.

Describe a situation when you took a stand for a customer.

Have you ever had a customer get angry at something that wasn't your fault? If so, please explain.

Describe the steps you would use to calm an angry customer.

Describe a recent situation when you didn't know with whom you needed to speak with in an organization to get something done. What did you do?

## **Communication Skills/Styles**

Have you ever worked with a person whose first language was something besides English or that had a disability that inhibited your ability to understand them? If so, please explain how you overcame the situation.

Tell me about how you communicate with your current supervisor concerning project process, concerns, and suggestions.

One of your co-workers has a "trait" or habit that affects his relationships with other co-workers and customers. It is a difficult trait to mention but you feel it must be brought to his/her attention. How do you handle the situation?

Your supervisor has given you instructions to complete a project. You are not clear as to some of the details of the instructions. What do you do?

Your department is working on an important project. During the course of the project, you recognize a potential problem with its implementation. What do you do? During the course of this same project, you have an idea that has the potential to improve the project but you are in a lower level position that may not get respect from upper management. What do you do?

Describe how you handle rude, difficult, or impatient people.

Describe a recent situation in which you asked for advice.

Describe a recent situation in which you asked for help.

If you had a project due and a co-worker wanted to talk about something else, what would you do?

## **Self Development**

Tell me about a time you had to learn a new skill in order to do your job.

Tell me about the most recent class or learning activity you participated in that was not a work requirement.

What is a subject, related to your job, which you would like to learn more about? Why?

After participating in a learning activity, how do you bring that knowledge back to the workplace?

Tell me about a time that you had to seek new ideas and approaches to allow you to complete a project.

## **Self-Management**

Tell me about a recent professional goal you set for yourself. What steps are you taking to reach that goal?

Tell me about a stressful work situation you have experienced and how you dealt with it.

Tell me about a time when you saw a potential conflict between yourself and another co-worker or between two of your co-workers. What did you do to help prevent the conflict?

Tell me about a time when you had to follow a superior's orders when you did not agree with them.

Tell me about a performance standard that you have set for yourself. For example, make 40 widgets in 4 hours without any mistakes or answer the phone by the second ring 9 out of 10 times. How are you working towards meeting that standard?

Tell me about a time that it was REALLY important to be focused on the task at

hand but you kept getting interrupted. What did you do to ensure your focus was where it needed to be?

You are given outlined procedures to complete your job tasks but know that if you skip some of the formalities, you can complete your job more quickly. What do you do?

Describe a situation when you had to exercise a significant amount of self-control. A fellow employee told you what his/her salary is and wants to know yours. How would you react and what would you do?

Tell me about a time that you were given an unwelcome assignment. What did you do?

Describe how you work under pressure. Do you anticipate problems effectively or do you just react to them?

Tell me about a time that you were given inadequate resources to get a job done. How were you able to complete the job?

Tell me about a team project you were involved in. What did you do to ensure the success of the team?

Tell me about the things you like about your current or most recent job.

Tell me what your least favorite part or parts are of your current or most recent job.

Your supervisor asks you to complete a task that you cannot stand doing. How do you react to him/her?

## **Interpersonal Skills**

Tell me about a conflict you have had with a superior. How did you resolve the conflict? How did you work towards mending the relationship with that superior?

Tell me about a situation where you were involved in a conflict. What did you do to resolve that conflict?

Describe the types of people you get along with best and why.

Describe the types of people you have difficulty getting along with and why.

Tell me about your relationship with a co-worker who you work well with.

Tell me about your relationship with a co-worker who you do not have a good working relationship. What steps have you taken to improve that relationship?

You have a co-worker who is swamped with a huge project. He/She doesn't think there is a light at the end of a tunnel. What do you do to help him/her through the project?

You have 2 co-workers who have formed an "alliance" and seem to make work difficult for everyone. How do you handle the situation?

You are assigned to a team project with 2 co-workers that you do not particularly like. How do you manage to make the team project successful while dealing with your personal feelings towards the two?

Give me an example of a situation where you had difficulties with a team member. What, if anything, did you do to resolve the difficulties?

Describe your relationship with the people you work with.

## **Accountability**

At your current or most recent job, what tasks do you routinely perform? How do these tasks relate to the overall functioning of the organization?

Tell me about a time that you were assigned a very difficult task. What resources did you use to accomplish the task? How did you delegate your time to accomplish the task?

You are given one and a half hours to throw together a luncheon for a client meeting. How do you get the lunch ready in time?

Describe a complex problem you solved.

Tell me about a time you had to take responsibility for a mistake you made.

Describe the thought process you go through when faced with making a tough decision.

How do you show commitment to your current or most recent organization?

Tell me about how your current or most recent job fits into the organization and how it contributes to the overall mission of the organization.

You are responsible for ordering the supplies for your office. How do you ensure that you are using the state's assets in the most appropriate way?

Describe a work situation in which you weren't proud of your performance. What did you learn from the situation?

Describe a recent project in which you failed. What did you learn from this?  
Describe how your current department is organized.

How do you ensure that your work is accurate and consistent?

## **Supervisory and Management Questions**

These questions, used in conjunction with the previous questions, can be useful in interviewing for supervisory and management positions.

### **Self Management**

Tell me about the professional organizations in which you are currently involved.

Have you ever served on a committee or as an officer of a professional organization? If yes, please explain the position and the duties.

What have you gotten out of being involved in professional organizations?

How do you keep current on what's going on in your field?

What books and magazines have you read or classes you have taken to keep abreast of what's new in your field?

What learning activities have you been involved with since college/high school?

In what ways have you invested in yourself to improve your performance?

Give me an example that illustrates how other people have used you as a resource for knowledge in your field.

What are your future professional goals? How do you plan to achieve them? What

might keep you from achieving them?

Tell me about a professional risk you took. What was the outcome?

Tell me about one of the most recent challenges you were subjected to. Were you able to turn it into an opportunity? Please explain.

Give me an example of when you were able to meet the personal and professional demands in your life yet still maintain a healthy balance.

Tell me what you would do if two of your co-workers had a personal problem between them that was interfering with *your* work. How would you handle it?

What's been the greatest influence on your career plans?

### **Emotional Maturity**

Give me an example of when you were able to apply a concept, theory or knowledge to a work problem or situation.

Describe a situation when you demonstrated initiative and took action without waiting for direction. What was the outcome?

Describe how something you learned made a significant difference on your career.

Give me an example of when you did not know enough about something to be effective. How did you handle it?

Describe the last time you had to make or implement a difficult decision that one or more people didn't like. How did you handle it? How did you handle their displeasure?

Tell me about a time when you were given a deadline by someone of higher authority which could not possibly be met. How did you handle it?

Tell me about a time you had to "choose your battles carefully."

Tell me about the time when someone has lost his/her temper at you in a business environment.

Describe situations you have been under pressure in which you feel you handled well.

Given a situation when you disagree with your supervisor, how would you deal with it?

Looking back now, is there anything that you could have done to improve your relationship with that one bad boss?

Please tell me a situation where you were in a dilemma to make a decision and how you dealt with it.

Tell me about a work situation in which you thought something wasn't "fair." What made it unfair? What would have made it "fair?"

Describe a recent situation that you just couldn't handle.

Tell me about your last situation with an unhappy customer. What did you do? How would you handle an angry supervisor?

Describe how you felt when a team you were on wanted to make a decision that you didn't agree with.

Describe a recent situation in which you had to quickly establish your credibility and gain the confidence of others. What did you do?

Describe a time when you had to take on something very new or different and you had little or no guidance and support in doing so. How did you handle it?

Has competition had any positive or negative impact on your achievements? How?

How would you characterize your leadership and use of authority?

How would you deal with a subordinate who violated a company policy?

## **Working Through Others**

You and your work team are given two hours to come up with a report on violence in the workplace, a subject you know very little about. You are given the job of team leader. How do you get the report done in 2 hours?

Describe how you would discipline a subordinate for inappropriate behavior.

Describe your proudest professional achievement that involved helping improve the performance of someone you supervised.

Assume you have received a job with a new company and are assigned to manage 15 to 20 people. Most of them are long-term employees with definite ideas about the “old way being the best way.” Your assignment is to get these people to support wholesale changes going on in the company. Outline your plan for achieving their support and participation.

What have you done in the past to build rapport and relationships with people?

Give me an example of your ability to communicate effectively and build relationships with people regardless of cultural differences.

Tell me about a time when you had to conduct a particularly difficult employee counseling or corrective session. How did you prepare for the session? Did you delay having it? How long?

Give me an example of one of the most significant contributions you made as a member of a high performing team. What, in your opinion, made it a high performing team? Describe how you felt about the contributions of other team members.

Describe a situation where the team was having trouble agreeing on a decision and what you did to facilitate consensus.

Give me an example of when you were on a team that failed to meet its objectives. What could the team have done differently?

What role do you take in a group situation?

What would you do if some team members weren't doing their share of the work?

What are the most important qualities in a person who will supervise other people?

What would you do if one of your team members who was getting older began to be unable to handle his end of the very physical job your division has. How would you handle it?

As a department manager, how would you establish staff rapport?

Explain how you motivate others to work more efficiently.

How would you handle an angry co-worker?

You asked a co-worker to complete a task to help move a project forward. When they complete the task, they bring it to you for your approval. You see they have made a good effort but have completed it incorrectly. How do you handle the situation?

## **Macro Oriented**

Tell me about a change that has occurred in your current or most recent workplace. How did you cope with those changes? What did you do to facilitate those changes?

Tell me about the most difficult work-related change or project you've ever been through. Describe your role and your feelings about the change.

Give me an example of the most significant professional goal you have met. How did you achieve it? What were your obstacles? How did you overcome them?

Tell me about an instance where you represent your current or most recent organization to an outside entity.

Tell me about how you represent your current or most recent organization to your co-workers and internal customers.

Has your job ever changed because of re-organization? Please explain how you handled the situation.

Describe how you would discipline a subordinate for tardiness.

Describe how you would discipline a subordinate for missing work.

Describe how you would discipline a subordinate for missing a deadline.

## **Results Oriented**

What changes do you see your profession or industry making in order to stay competitive?

Give me an example of when you took a risk to achieve a goal.

Tell me about a time when you overcame great obstacles to achieve something significant.

Describe a recent situation in which it took several tries or approaches before you were able to figure out what was going on.

Describe projects that have required accuracy and attention to detail.

Finish this sentence: "Successful managers are the ones who....."

In relation to others, how do you grade yourself on taking initiative?  
What organizational techniques do you use to manage your workload?

Describe the biggest change you have brought to your current company.

Tell me about a professional mistake or error you made. What was the outcome?  
What, if anything would you do differently? What did you learn from it?

How do you evaluate your own work? What do you do with the results of those evaluations?

Describe a situation when you were able to strengthen a relationship by communicating effectively. What made your communication effective?

Describe how your ability to communicate effectively and build relationships with many different types of people has contributed to one of your greatest accomplishments.

Give me an example of when you achieved something by your persistence that others couldn't.

Tell me about a time when you had a project or work due on a deadline and you got sick the night before it was due and weren't able to go to work the next day. How did you handle the situation?

Tell me about a time when you had two or more things which absolutely had to be completed on the same day (multiple first priorities). How did you handle the situation?

If we contacted your current or most recent supervisor for reference comments, what do you think he or she would say about you?

## **Interpersonal Skills**

Give me an example of a situation when you have demonstrated sensitivity to diversity issues.

Describe the ideal supervisor/employee relationship.

Give me an example of when you identified with someone else's difficulties at work. What, if anything, did you do to help them?

Give me an example of a time when a company policy or action hurt people. What, if anything, did you do to mitigate the negative consequences to people?

Describe a situation when you were criticized for being too concerned about the difficulties of others.

Describe a recent situation in which what was really going on with someone else was much more complicated than it might have seemed on the surface.

Describe how you go about mentoring an employee.

Tell me about a time when two people you supervised got "crossed up" and their upset spilled over into their work. How did you handle the situation?

Describe a recent situation when miscommunication created a problem on the job. Have you prepared and communicated ideas and information in a formal setting? Please explain.

When have your verbal communications been important enough to follow-up in writing?

How have you developed your interpersonal skills?

How do you communicate with people at different levels?

## **Resource Management**

Tell me about a time when an employee you supervised disagreed with you about a work issue and suggested an alternate way the issue might be addressed. How did you handle that?

When faced with layoffs, how would you decide who to let go?

Give me an example of when your ability to manage your time and priorities proved

to be an asset.

What have you done in the past that demonstrates your commitment to continuous improvement?

How do you delegate responsibility?

How do you select the most appropriate candidate for a position?

Give me an example of when you had to make a decision in favor of your own self-interest or someone else's. What were your thoughts and feelings? What did you do?

## Analyzing Answers to Behavioral Questions

In assessing the sufficiency of answers to questions such as those posed in the preceding sections, the interviewer may desire to utilize the “STAR” method, whereby an answer is assessed for including a clear statement of

- Situation or Task
- Action Taken
- Result or Outcome

In other words, the interviewer expects an answer to a behavioral question to specifically describe a situation or task relevant to the question, to clearly express the action taken, and to succinctly summarize a result or outcome. The STAR process provides a useful frame for considering the worth of an answer.

Interviewers should be alert to rambling answers or answers that are unresponsive to the questions.

## Distinguishing Among Applicants

A particularly critical part of the hiring process occurs after interviews are completed and employers begin to differentiate among applicants. This manual does not provide advice on the manner in which this process should be conducted other than to point out the importance of

- Objective job-related criteria
- Consistent neutral application of the criteria to every candidate
- Uniform application of every aspect of a criterion to every candidate

- Documentation that supports a job-related, non-discriminatory basis for the hiring decision

## Conclusion

This Manual seeks to provide the interviewer with a solid overview of the role competency based behavioral questions can play in a structured interview. The information provided, while far from comprehensive, serves to illustrate the value of probing potential performance through analysis of past performance.

An agency desiring to adopt this model should first assure that

- Interviewers are fully trained on legal and effective interview practices
- HR staff are fully engaged in insuring consistency of the interview practices
- Legal staff are consulted to determine the legality of questions
- Candidates are fully informed of the role and format of the interview.

## Appendix I

### **DEFINITIONS OF LEVELS I AND II FOR PURPOSES OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR COMPETENCY RATING PROCESS**

#### **Level I – First Line Operational**

Persons who occupy positions within this category typically provide direct task-oriented services, often at the front line level. Examples would include direct care workers, maintenance and repair workers, correctional officers, technicians, front line law enforcement personnel, lower level clerical personnel, and other persons who provide direct service but do not in any way direct policy or exercise more than basic discretion in the direction of their duties. Members of this level do not exercise supervisory or managerial authority.

#### **Level II – Professional**

Persons who occupy positions within this category provide professional and sometimes managerial services. Examples would include managers and supervisors at both Levels I and II. Additionally, professional staff such as attorneys, doctors, nurses, accountants/auditors, social workers, counselors, psychologists, and other similar positions would be included. Finally, technical staff at higher levels (such as engineer II and above, accountant/auditor II and above, upper levels of the administrative assistant class, etc.) might also be included where those jobs involve duties of a more complex nature than Level I.

# GENERAL PUBLIC SECTOR COMPETENCIES

## LEVEL I General Public Sector Competencies

**Integrity and Honesty:** Models and demonstrates high standards of integrity, trust, openness and respect for others. Demonstrates a sense of responsibility and commitment to the public trust through statements and actions. Demonstrates integrity by honoring commitments and promises. Demonstrates integrity by maintaining necessary confidentiality.

**Work Ethic:** Conscientiously abides by the rules, regulations and procedures governing work. Exhibits a strong work ethic by being productive, diligent, conscientious, timely, and loyal.

**Service Orientation:** Seeks to understand and meets and / or exceeds the needs and expectations of customers. Treats customers with respect, responding to requests in a professional manner, even in difficult circumstances. Provides accurate and timely service. Develops positive relationships with customers. Demonstrates a commitment to quality public service through statements and actions.

**Accountability:** Is productive and carries fair share of the workload. Accepts responsibility for actions and results. Focuses on quality and expends the necessary time and effort to achieve goals. Demonstrates loyalty to the job and the agency and is a good steward of state assets. Deals effectively with pressure and recovers quickly from setbacks. Takes ownership of tasks, performance standards and mistakes. Has knowledge of how to perform one's job.

**Self-Management Skills:** Maintains a positive attitude. Effectively manages emotions and impulses and appropriate balance between personal life and work. Treats all people with respect, courtesy, and consideration. Communicates effectively. Remains open to new ideas and approaches, shows flexibility to complete job within defined parameters. Is able to lead and follow. Avoids conflicts of interest. Promotes cooperation and teamwork.

**Interpersonal Skills:** Shows understanding, courtesy, tact, empathy and concern; develops and maintains relationships. Demonstrates cross cultural sensitivity and understanding. Identifies and seeks to solve problems and resolve conflict situations.

**Communication Skills:** Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues such as body language in ways that are appropriate to listeners and situations. Provides thorough and accurate information. Asks questions for clarification and to insure understanding. Expresses information to individuals or groups effectively, taking into account the audience and nature of the information;

listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues, and responds appropriately. May make oral presentations.

**Self-Development:** Is knowledgeable about the task. Remains open to change and new information and ideas; adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.

## **LEVEL II      General Public Sector Competencies**

**Integrity and Honesty:** Models and demonstrates high standards of integrity, trust, openness and respect for others. Demonstrates a sense of responsibility and commitment to the public trust through statements and actions. Demonstrates integrity by honoring commitments and promises. Demonstrates integrity by maintaining necessary confidentiality.

**Work Ethic:** Conscientiously abides by the rules, regulations and procedures governing work. Exhibits a strong work ethic by being productive, diligent, conscientious, timely, and loyal.

**Service Orientation:** Seeks to understand and meets and / or exceeds the needs and expectations of customers. Treats customers with respect, responding to requests in a professional manner, even in difficult circumstances. Provides accurate and timely service. Develops positive relationships with customers. Demonstrates a commitment to quality public service through statements and actions.

**Accountability:** Is productive and carries fair share of the workload. Accepts responsibility for actions and results. Focuses on quality and expends the necessary time and effort to achieve goals. Demonstrates loyalty to the job and the agency and is a good steward of state assets. Steadfastly persists in overcoming obstacles and pushes self for results. Maintains necessary attention to detail to achieve high level performance. Deals effectively with pressure and recovers quickly from setbacks. Takes ownership of tasks, performance standards and mistakes. Has knowledge of how to perform one's job. Knows the organization's mission and functions and how it fits into state government.

**Self Management Skills:** Encourages and facilitates cooperation, pride, trust, and group identity; fosters commitment and team spirit; works effectively and cooperatively with others to achieve goals. Maintains a positive attitude. Effectively manages emotions and impulses. Treats all people with respect, courtesy, and consideration. Communicates effectively. Remains open to new ideas and approaches. Avoids conflicts of interest. Promotes cooperation and teamwork.

**Interpersonal Skills:** Shows understanding, courtesy, tact, empathy and concern; develops and maintains relationships. Demonstrates cross cultural sensitivity and understanding. Identifies and seeks to solve problems and prevent or resolve conflict situations. Encourages others through positive reinforcement.

**Communication Skills:** Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues such as body language in ways that are appropriate to listeners and situations. Expresses information to individuals or groups effectively, taking into account the audience and nature of the information; listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues, and responds appropriately. May make oral presentations. Communicates ideas, suggestions and concerns as well as outcomes and progress throughout the process of an activity. Provides thorough and accurate information.

**Self-Development:** Seeks efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills; uses training, feedback, or other opportunities for self-learning and development. Develops and enhances skills to adapt to changing organizational needs. Remains open to change and new information and ideas; adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.

## Appendix II

### LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT FOR USE IN COMPETENCY IDENTIFICATION

#### ***Level I - Front Line Supervisors***

People at this level supervise workers who perform the work of the agency. They plan work duties, assign tasks, coach and motivate staff, and measure the performance of their employees. Examples include Direct Care Supervisors, upper levels of the Administrative Assistants series, Director I.

#### ***Level II - Middle Management***

People at this level may manage front line supervisors as well as some employees performing the work of the agency or they may manage projects or programs. They may be responsible for selecting and training front line supervisors, managing and distributing some resources, and communicating across functional lines. Examples include Division Directors, Branch Managers, some Professional Classes such as upper levels of the Personnel Officer and Auditor series.

#### ***Level III - Upper Management***

People at this level are mainly responsible for planning, organizing, and directing the agency's resources. They may be involved in long-range planning, staffing and budgeting. They may manage middle level managers. Examples include Bureau Directors and Office Directors.

Please note that Executive Directors and Deputy Directors are not included in the descriptions and will not be considered in the competency identification.

## MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES DEFINED BY LEVEL

### LEVEL I MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

**Front Line Supervisor** - People at this level supervise workers who perform the work of the agency. They plan work duties, assign task, coach and motivate staff, and measure the performance of their employees. The following competencies were considered to be essential for all public managers at this level of management.

**Emotional Maturity** - Conducts oneself in a professional, consistent manner when representing the organization. Has the ability to work through adversity and hold self and others accountable for work actions.

**Macro Oriented** - Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, and regulations related to specialized areas of expertise. Exercises good judgment, makes sound, well informed decisions.

**Working Through Others** - Shows a willingness to get work done through others, supports, motivates and is an advocate for staff. Reinforces and rewards team efforts and positive behaviors. Is fair, yet firm with others. Provides feedback.

**Results Oriented** - Plans effectively to achieve or exceed goals, sets and meets deadlines.

**The following behavioral descriptions were identified by the management task as supplemental to the behavior identified in the general public sector competencies.**

**Self- Management** - Copes effectively with change. Allows self and others to make mistakes and learns from those mistakes.

**Interpersonal Skills** - Models appropriate behavior.

### LEVEL II MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

**Middle Level Managers** - People at this level may manage front line supervisors as well as some employees performing the work of the agency or they may manage projects or programs. They may be responsible for selecting and training front line supervisors, managing and distributing some resources, and communicating across

functional lines. The following competencies were considered to be essential for all public managers at this level of management.

**Emotional Maturity** - Conducts oneself in a professional, consistent manner when representing the organization. Exhibits the ability to work through challenges and create opportunities. Has the ability to work through adversity and hold self and others accountable for work actions. Takes risks appropriate to ones level of responsibility. Acts as a settling influence in a crisis.

**Macro Oriented** - Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, and regulations related to specialized areas of expertise. Understands effects of decisions on the organization and on other organizations. Exercises good judgment, makes sound, well informed decisions. Acts as a change agent by initiating and supporting change within the agency.

**Working Through Others** - Creates effective teams; shows a willingness to get work done through others; supports, motivates and is an advocate for staff. Monitors workloads and provides feedback. Clearly and comfortably delegates work, trusting and empowering others to perform. Reinforces and rewards team efforts and positive behaviors. Is fair, yet firm with others.

**Results Oriented** - Identifies, analyzes, and solves problems. Plans effectively to achieve or exceed goals, sets and meets deadlines. Develops standards of performance and knows what and how to measure.

**Resource Management** - Demonstrates ability to plan, prioritize and organize. Acquires and effectively and efficiently administers and allocates human, financial, material and information resources.

**The following behavioral descriptions were identified by the management task as supplemental to the behavior identified in the general public sector competencies.**

**Self- Management** - Continuously evaluates and adapts, copes effectively with change. Allows self and others to make mistakes and learns from those mistakes. Adheres to high ethical standards.

**Interpersonal Skills** - Expresses facts and ideas both verbally and in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner, helping others translate vision into action. Models appropriate behavior. Recognizes and develops potential in others, mentors.

## **LEVEL III MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES**

**Upper Level Managers** -People at this level are mainly responsible for planning, organizing, and directing the agency's resources. They may be involved in long-range

planning, staffing and budgeting. They may manage middle level managers.

**The following competencies were considered to be essential for all public managers at this level of management:**

**Emotional Maturity** - Conducts oneself in a professional, consistent manner when representing the organization. Exhibits the ability to work through challenges and create opportunities. Has the ability to work through adversity and hold self and others accountable for work actions. Takes risks appropriate to ones level of responsibility. Acts as a settling influence in a crisis. Emulates proven leaders.

**Macro Oriented** - Communicates organizational vision and understands effects of decisions on the organization and on other organizations as well as how external factors impact the organization. Exercises good judgment, makes sound, well informed decisions. Acts as a change agent by initiating and supporting change within the agency. Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, and regulations related to specialized areas of expertise.

**Working Through Others** - Supports, motivates and is an advocate for staff. Recognizes and appreciates diversity. Creates synergistic teams using strengths of all team members. Delegates effectively, sharing both responsibility and accountability; empowers employees and trusts others to perform without micro-managing. Reinforces and rewards team efforts and positive behaviors. Is fair, yet firm with others.

**Results Oriented** - Identifies, analyzes, and solves problems. Plans effectively to achieve or exceed goals, sets and meets deadlines. Develops standards of performance and knows what and how to measure. Uses change management skills to bridge the gap between current and desired performance. Pushes self and others for results.

**Resource Management** - Demonstrates ability to plan, prioritize and organize. Acquires and effectively and efficiently administers and allocates human, financial, material and information resources. Works to development and implement strategic planning for the agency. Assesses current and future staffing needs based on organizational goals and budget realities. Recruits, develops and retains a diverse workforce.

**The following behavioral descriptions were identified by the management task as supplemental to the behavior identified in the general public sector competencies.**

**Self- Management** - Continuously evaluates and adapts, copes effectively with change. Allows self and others to make mistakes and learns from those mistakes. Adheres to high ethical standards. Involved in professional organizations.

**Interpersonal Skills** - Expresses facts and ideas both verbally and in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner, helping others translate vision into action. Models appropriate behavior. Recognizes and develops potential in others, leads others to life-long learning by example.

## Appendix III

# Competency Assessment Worksheet for Resume Review and Interview Planning

This worksheet should be completed after reviewing a job candidate's resume. It will serve as a reference for asking interview questions and as a guide for assessing candidates against your criteria in each competency category.

Candidate \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Location \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

		INTERVIEW		
Competency Category	Resume Notes	Evidence Indication a Significant Strength	Evidence Indicating a Moderate Strength	Evidence Against
(list competency)				

		INTERVIEW		
Competency Category	Resume Notes	Evidence Indication a Significant Strength	Evidence Indicating a Moderate Strength	Evidence Against

# Appendix IV

## Technical Competency Assessment Worksheet for Resume Review and Interview Planning

This worksheet should be completed after reviewing a job candidate's resume. It will serve as a reference for asking interview questions and as a guide for assessing candidates against your criteria in each competency category.

Candidate \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Location \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

		INTERVIEW		
Technical Competency	Resume Notes	Evidence Indication a Significant Strength	Evidence Indicating a Moderate Strength	Evidence Against
(list competency)				

		INTERVIEW		
Technical Competency	Resume Notes	Evidence Indication a Significant Strength	Evidence Indicating a Moderate Strength	Evidence Against

## NOTES

For more information  
about interviewing  
or  
to inquire about  
training opportunities  
contact:

**The Whitten Group, P.A.**  
**Post Office Box 12707**  
**Jackson, Mississippi 39236-2707**  
**Phn 601.352.9448**  
**Fax 601.352.9432**  
**information @thewhittengroup.com**

