# National Institutes of Health

# GS - 343 Program/Management Analysis

# Behavioral Interview Guide

## Behavioral-Based Interview Overview

Behavioral-based interviews focus on discovering how a candidate performed in specific work-related situations. This interview technique seeks to uncover how a potential employee actually did behave in a given situation; not on how he or she might behave in the future. The premise behind this technique is that a good predictor of future performance is how someone performed in the past in a similar situation. Behavioral-based interviews are becoming more common throughout industry and government and many candidates are familiar with this technique and are well prepared for these interviews. Candidates can and should draw on previous work related experiences as well as non-work-related experiences (e.g., school projects, community involvement) that are relevant to the interview questions.

### Behavioral Interviewing Suggested Protocol

As much as possible, all questions should relate to experiences that have occurred in the last 2-3 years (best for recollection of behavioral details).

All behavioral interview questions should focus on what the interviewee did, said, felt or thought in the past. The interviewer should be looking for phrases such as “I did….”, “I said….” etc.

Do not ask questions about what the interviewee would do in a given situation or what they would have done differently. The focus is on what the interviewee actually did/said/thought/felt in the past. If the interviewee uses such phrases as “I would,” the interviewer should probe by saying, “What did you actually do at that time?”

The interviewee should focus on what he/she did, rather than what “we” did. While working as part of a team is very common and desirable, it is important to understand what the candidate’s individual role was. The interviewer should probe the interviewee if “We” is used in describing actions. For example, if the interviewee says “We implemented the new payroll system by…..”, it is the interviewer’s job to ask the interviewee what his/her role was and what he actually did (as an individual).

Prior to delving into the detail of each question, ask the interviewee to provide a brief (30 second) overview of the situation by highlighting the beginning, middle, and end. This helps the interviewer to keep the interview on track. For example, if you feel lost in the discussion, you can pause the conversation by asking the interviewee where you are in the story (beginning, middle, or end).

### Suggested Introduction to the Interview

This is a behavioral interview, which may be different from interviews you have had in the past. A behavioral interview focuses on what you have done, said, felt and thought in past experiences. Please use the first person as much as possible because I am most interested in what you have done, said, thought and felt in the situations. So, if you use the term “we” rather than “I”, I may interrupt you to clarify what you did in the situation versus what others did.

I am going to ask you specific questions about your experiences and will ask that you try, as best as you can, to only discuss experiences that have occurred within the past 2 or 3 years so that you will be able to recall the details of the situations.

I will ask follow-up questions to get as many of the details around what you were doing in the situation. Imagine that I am making a movie of what you were doing in the given situation. I am interested in everything you did, said, thought and felt.

NOTE: The information provided above offers suggestions for conducting behavioral-based interviews. Interviewers should use this information as a tool and tailor the interview to meet the needs of the individual organization.

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| Program Management Analysis |
| Competency | Definition |
| **Federal and Departmental Policies and Procedures Knowledge** | Understand and applies knowledge of Federal and Departmental statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures. |
| **Management Analysis** | Conducts research and solves organizational inefficiencies to increase the effectiveness of the organization. |
| **Process Management** | Develops and monitors processes and organizes resources to achieve desired results. |

## Federal and Departmental Policies and Procedures Knowledge

Understand and applies knowledge of Federal and Departmental statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures.

### Key Behaviors:

* Maintains comprehensive working knowledge of related statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures affecting assigned areas.
* Ensures work conforms to statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures and is completed within established timeframes.
* Provides advice and guidance concerning statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures.

### Interview questions:

1. Describe a time when you had to inform, advise, and educate others regarding federal government policies and procedures? What was your approach?
2. Provide an example of a time when you had to research information regarding government rules. What sources of information did you use?
3. What steps do you take to research legislation/standards/policies/procedures? Please be specific.
4. Provide an example of a time you were asked to review and analyze a law, regulation or policy, assess the impact on an organization and recommend an action plan. What resources did you use? What was your recommendation?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

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| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

## Management Analysis

Conducts research and solves organizational inefficiencies to increase the effectiveness of the organization.

### Key Behaviors:

* Understands management and organizational principles pertaining to areas of responsibility (e.g., delegations of authority, administrative procedures) in order to plan and conduct complex studies to assess organizational operations.
* Identifies sources of information/data for a wide variety of problems and needs.
* Accurately interprets study results.
* Identifies and gathers necessary and correct information needed (via case studies, etc.) to clarify an issue or make a decision.
* Assesses problems accurately and arrives at solutions that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of resources and operations.
* Conducts benchmarking and best practices research.

### Interview questions:

1. Tell me about a study you planned and coordinated. What issue were you addressing? What did you do to ensure the successful completion of the study? Tell me about a time that you used the results of a case study or similar document to improve the efficiency and effectiveness within the organization. How did the findings impact the solutions identified?
2. Tell me about a time that you used the results of a case study or similar document to improve the efficiency and effectiveness within the organization. How did the findings impact the solutions identified?
3. Discuss any benchmarking (i.e., evaluating processes against best practices) or best practices (i.e., most efficient and effective way of accomplishing a goal) research projects in which you have been involved. What steps do you take to complete this type of research?
4. Describe a time when you had to assess a problem and recommend solution? How did you gather the information you needed to accurately assess the problem? What was the result?

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

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| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

## Process Management

Develops and monitors processes and organizes resources to achieve desired results.

### Key Behaviors:

* Evaluates efficiency and effectiveness of resource utilization and results accomplishment.
* Establishes clear, well-defined processes necessary to achieve the desired outcomes.
* Organizes people and activities to accomplish results.
* Identifies and addresses process problems promptly and follows through to ensure that corrective or recommended process updates are effectively implemented.
* Delineates complex processes into more simple tasks and functions.
* Analyzes business processes to identify process owners, cycle time, variations, bottlenecks, and redundancies to support streamlining and other business improvements.
* Serves customers by developing and maintaining SOPs and other policy/procedure guidelines that foster continuity of operations and organizational resilience.
* Understands the various approaches for mapping the workflow of business processes to outline steps users follow and to develop a baseline for improvements or reengineering.
* Creates an effective work flow that effectively coordinates and integrates tasks and functions
* Identifies and takes advantage of opportunities to accomplish multiple objectives and obtain synergies through process development and management.
* Effectively communicates and coordinates with other stakeholders in the process.

### Interview questions:

1. Describe a time when you had to identify, monitor and coordinate resources to achieve a desired result. How did you achieve the desired outcome? What would you have done differently? Describe a time when you had to develop a workflow to accomplish a task. What was your approach? What was the result?
2. Describe a time when you had to create/develop a workflow to accomplish a task. What was your approach? What was the result?
3. In this role, you will utilize various tools and techniques to measure, control, report, and improve processes to meet customer requirements. Describe some of the tools and techniques you have used to measure, control and improve processes.
4. You must coordinate with a number of stakeholders (i.e., persons who have interest in the process) in order to manage processes. Describe a time when you have used communications methods to manage stakeholders and accomplish multiple objectives.
5. Tell me about a time when you came up with a better, faster or more efficient way to perform a process or job.

### Candidate Response:

### Interview Summary:

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| --- |
| **Summarize the situation, behaviors demonstrated and outcomes. Then provide an overall proficiency rating for the competency as defined in the Administrative Officer competency model.** |
| Situation: |
| Behaviors: |
| Outcome: |
| Overall Competency Proficiency Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 |

## NIH Competency Proficiency Scale

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| Score | Proficiency Level | Description |
| **1** | **Fundamental Awareness** (basic knowledge) | You have a common knowledge or an understanding of basic techniques and concepts.* Focus on learning.
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| **2** | **Novice** (limited experience)  | You have the level of experience gained in a classroom and/or experimental scenarios or as a trainee on-the-job. You are expected to need help when performing this skill.* Focus on developing through on-the-job experience;
* You understand and can discuss terminology, concepts, principles and issues related to this competency;
* You utilize the full range of reference and resource materials in this competency.
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| **3** | **Intermediate** (practical application) | You are able to successfully complete tasks in this competency as requested. Help from an expert may be required from time to time, but you can usually perform the skill independently.* Focus is on applying and enhancing knowledge or skill;
* You have applied this competency to situations occasionally while needing minimal guidance to perform successfully;
* You understand and can discuss the application and implications of changes to processes, policies, and procedures in this area.
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| **4** | **Advanced** (applied theory) | You can perform the actions associated with this skill without assistance. You are certainly recognized within your immediate organization as "a person to ask" when difficult questions arise regarding this skill.* Focus is on broad organizational/professional issues;
* You have consistently provided practical/relevant ideas and perspectives on process or practice improvements which may easily be implemented;
* You are capable of coaching others in the application of this competency by translating complex nuances relating to this competency into easy to understand terms;
* You participate in senior level discussions regarding this competency;
* You assist in the development of reference and resource materials in this competency.
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| **5** | **Expert** (recognized authority) | You are known as an expert in this area. You can provide guidance, troubleshoot and answer questions related to this area of expertise and the field where the skill is used.* Focus is strategic;
* You have demonstrated consistent excellence in applying this competency across multiple projects and/or organizations;
* You are considered the “go to” person in this area within NIH and/or outside organizations;
* You create new applications for and/or lead the development of reference and resource materials for this competency;
* You are able to diagram or explain the relevant process elements and issues in relation to organizational issues and trends in sufficient detail during discussions and presentations, to foster a greater understanding among internal and external colleagues and constituents.
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