

# PCoP Webinar Series: Tips for Nailing your Next Interview

August 12, 2021

Susan Layton, HQ PCoP Deputy /  
SAD Planning Chief (Acting)  
Rhiannon Kucharski, POH Planning  
Chief & HQ Planning Workforce  
Development Committee



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

# OVERVIEW

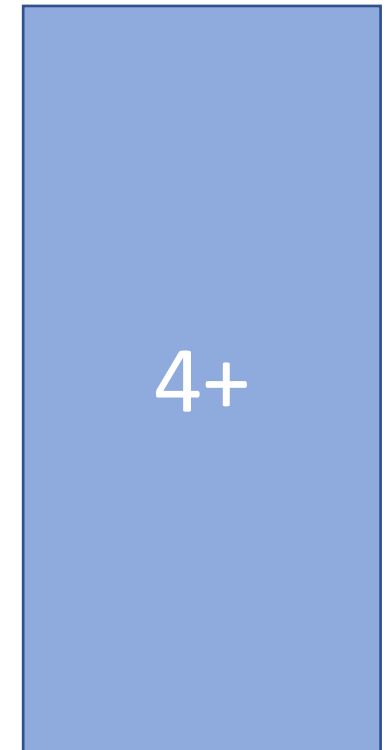


- In this Webinar, we will give you tips on how to prepare for your next interview with USACE
  - Even though this presentation is focused on internal USACE interviews – remember that you can use these tips for special details with Army, Congress, and other Federal positions outside of USACE
- We will go over:
  - Tips for strong applications
  - How to prepare for an interview
  - What to do and not do in an interview
  - Different types of interviews
  - Tips on following up after interview
  - And tips from leadership on how to succeed

# FIRST, LET'S GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER...



Annotate (select pen): How many times have you interviewed in the past 5 years?



# PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE

Before you get started, thoroughly research position

- Know ins and outs of position including:
  - Duties position entails
  - Characteristics and experience they're looking for in candidate

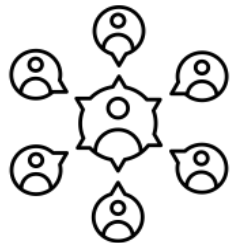
Be careful with USA Jobs!



- If position description is vague or confusing (as is often true), don't be afraid to reach out to job announcement POC to clarify
- Check and double-check USA Jobs requirements
  - Make sure your resume and transcripts are in correct form and include required elements for USA Jobs resume.
    - Don't get thrown out on a technicality!
  - Some announcements require your SF-50 and/or last performance appraisal
- If cover letters are allowed, submit a GREAT one to stand out to panel
  - Spell check and make sure formatting, spacing. etc. are correct before submitting

# AT LEAST ANNUALLY - RESUME REFRESH!

If it's been a while since your last interview, make sure that all your documents and information are up-to-date and loaded in USAJobs



- Your resume should reflect your most recent – and most relevant – experience
- Your resume should convey the “so what” of your accomplishments
- Always update your resume and cover letter to match position for which you’re applying
- Reach out to your references to make sure you have correct contact information
- Take time to prepare and proof your writing sample and presentation materials

# TIPS FOR A TOP INTERVIEW: PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE



Practice: Ask your personal mentors or supervisor to set up mock interview



Come to interview prepared with:

- Your personal message / elevator pitch
- Information about yourself that you want panel to know
- Lots of examples of your past work highlights and their *SO WHAT!*
- How will you apply your knowledge, skills, abilities and lessons learned to the position for which you are interviewing?
- Summary points and questions to close out interview



9 times out of 10, final question is, “If offered this position, would you accept it and why? And “Is there anything else you want us to consider as we make our decision?” Practice your response to these and have strong answers!

# TIPS FOR A TOP INTERVIEW: ON THE DAY



- Dress for success – even in virtual interview!
- Show good **time management** - answer questions thoroughly, but don't spend too much time on any one response
- Show both **breadth** and **depth** in responses
- Focus on **what you can bring to position** – remember the highlights about yourself you prepared ahead of time and try to weave them into your responses, regardless of questions asked



# TIPS FOR A TOP INTERVIEW: ON THE DAY



- Be early; make sure you do not have any technological problems if interview is virtual
- Consider taking notes if it will help you – Many interview questions have multiple parts and it's important that you answer entire question
- Don't be afraid to ask to have a question repeated if you get lost
- Be aware of your verbal and/or physical tics if you're nervous.
  - Ask your mentors if they notice any repetitive speech patterns or distracting movements in your mock interview and practice avoiding these pitfalls



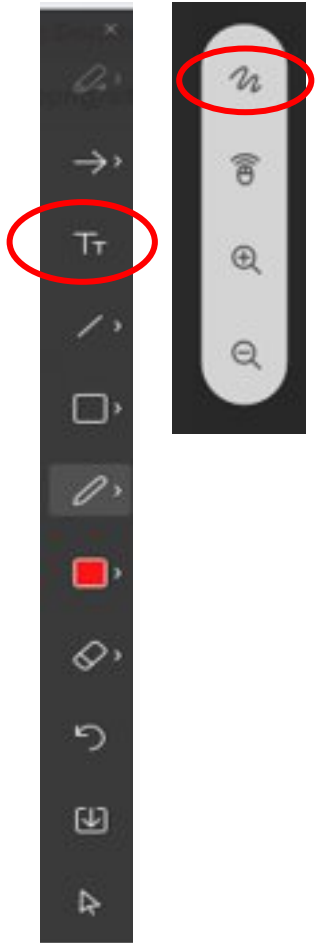


# TIPS FOR A TOP INTERVIEW: YOUR INPUT

- Did we miss any of your favorite interview tips?
- Add your top tips in chat!



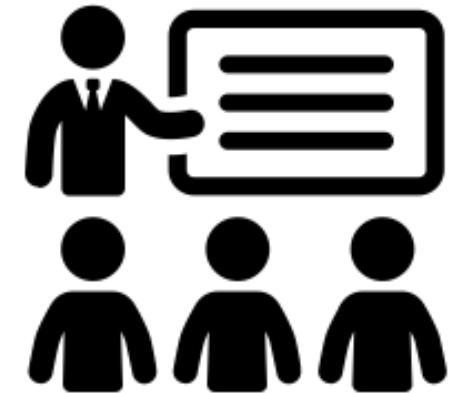
# LOOKING BACK...



With annotation (select text): What is the funniest thing that ever happened to you in an interview?

# UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF POSITIONS YOU'RE INTERVIEWING FOR

- Within USACE, you may be applying for:
  - District positions
  - MSC positions
  - HQ positions
  - Temporary Details
  - Certifications – WRCP
- Programs
  - Planning Associates (PA)
  - Leadership Development Program
- External to Planning
  - Headquarters Levee Safety/Dam Safety endowed chairs



# WHAT NOT TO DO IN AN INTERVIEW



Don't assume that your interviewers know everything about you – even if you know everyone on the panel.



Don't be too causal or too conversational – be personable but keep it professional.



Don't forget to fully answer each question – stay focused and use your notes.



Don't spend too much time answering the first questions – use the interview to demonstrate your time management skills

# WHAT NOT TO DO IN AN INTERVIEW



Don't babble – stay on topic and keep your answers concise.



DON'T say “no” if they ask you if you have any questions about the position at the conclusion of the interview. Have a question or two in your back pocket that demonstrates your knowledge of the position, department, or organization.

# TIPS FOR INTERVIEWERS!

The same as for interviewees!!!

# DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF INTERVIEWS

Different GS levels and different programs have different interview approaches – it's not always a panel with questions lobbed at you!



Your interview might involve:

- Being questioned by a panel
- Producing writing samples
- Presentations
  - You may be asked to give a presentation (with or without preparation on a topic you may – or may not – be familiar with!)



# VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS



Prepare ahead of time to avoid the headaches of technical difficulties!

- Check your camera, microphone, WiFi, and the platform you'll use before the interview
- Have a back-up phone line ready just in case
- Charge your phone!
- Check your camera angles and background.



Keep your camera on during the interview to make a good impression!



# POST-INTERVIEW REVIEW...



With annotation (select text): How do you normally feel when an interview is over?



# TIPS FROM LEADERSHIP



**Wes Coleman**  
Chief of the Office of Water  
Project Review

# AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Consider sending a thank you note to your interviewer(s) to thank them for their time and leave a good impression



Seek feedback – DON'T be embarrassed to reach out to the interview panel for feedback after the hiring process is complete, especially if you DIDN'T get the job. We ALL have been denied jobs. It's part of growing as a professional and it's nothing to be ashamed of!

Any questions?

Thank you and good luck!