
CITY OF MADISON

Equitable Hiring Plan 3.0



Racial Equity & Social Justice Initiative

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Background Information

What is RESJI?

The Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) is a **citywide effort** to establish racial equity and social justice as core principles in all decisions, policies, and functions in the City of Madison. Equity is not limited to a person, office, division, or department; it must be embedded everywhere. To build a **culture of inclusion and belonging**, we all must work to infuse equity in our day-to-day work, including hiring.

What is the Equitable Hiring Plan(EHP)?

The EHP is **THE hiring plan** the City uses to ensure equitable hiring.

Diverse teams work together to critically analyze long-standing inequities built into hiring and provide strategies to build a process that is equitable and **inclusive from start to finish**. Through use of this tool you will consider process changes that foster racial equity and social justice at the City of Madison.

Why do we need the EHP?

To get the best hire. Every hire needs a hiring plan.

When racial equity is not consciously addressed, racial and social *inequities* are reinforced. Racial and social disparities in Madison, Dane County, and Wisconsin are well documented. We can see impacts within our City workforce, policies, and practices. To address this, we must examine the hiring process and strive for inclusion, accessibility, and equity.

When do we use the EHP?

Complete the EHP for every new recruit-ment. If one of these conditions are met, work with your HR analyst to expedite the process:*

1. The department used the EHP within the same classification in the last year; or
2. The department used the EHP recently to analyze a similar classification and equitable changes will be incorporated into the new recruitment/job posting.

Confirm above have been met with your HR Analyst.

Not every EHP has to start from scratch. You can always re-use successful interview questions and testing process from a previous EHP.

***Note: Red-flagged positions *must* be processed through the Equitable Hiring Plan. If your position is red-flagged and you have previously run an EHP in the last year, consult with DCR's Affirmative Action Manager and your HR Analyst .**

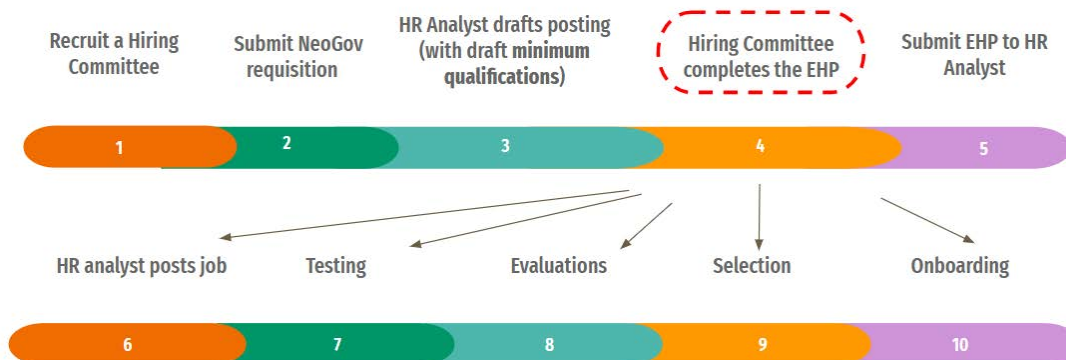
Madison's Story

Madison was one of the first cities across the country to develop an Equitable Hiring Tool. Through hundreds of applications of our tool, robust commitment and feedback, we've continually improved our process. This process is essential for us to change some key hiring statistics:

- Based on 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates, **White people are overrepresented** in the City's workforce at 76% compared to 69% of the city.
- While data on gender is limited and binary, ACS and 2024 City staffing data show **women are underrepresented** as they make up 50% of the city but only 33% of City's workforce.
- In the last six years (2018-2023), we've seen an overall increase in men of color new hires but an **overall decrease in women of color new hires**.

How to Use the EHP

A. Steps to an Equitable Hiring Plan



These are equitable hiring process steps. Completing the EHP is one piece of the puzzle. **The recommendations from the EHP ensure equity is prioritized throughout the process.**

B. Recruit a Hiring Committee

Recruit a **diverse** hiring committee who will be part of the evaluation and interview processes. **The hiring committee is responsible for completing the EHP at the beginning of the recruitment.** When recruiting Hiring Committee members, consider race, ethnicity, gender, disability, subject matter expertise, field of work, organization (people from outside your agency), and organizational position (people with different work experiences or levels of authority).

Create a Hiring Committee with diverse social identities and those who have experience in applying racial equity and social justice principles. Members of the Hiring Committee cannot apply for the position being reviewed.

● New Process ● New Process ● New Process ●

Interview panels must include at least two individuals from gender groups that are underrepresented, including women, transgender, and gender nonconforming individuals. The direct supervisor is also required to be in at least one interview stage so candidates have a chance to meet their supervisor.

When possible show gratitude to unpaid community members with honorariums, gift cards, or meals.

You will likely need 3-7 people including the hiring manager. If you use an evaluation such as supplemental questions, the scorers of the supplemental questions cannot also be on the interviewing panel. Each interviewing panel should consist of different people. A best practice for interviews is to have three-four panel members with at least one member who is external to the agency.

Example 1: Recruitment with no evaluation and only 1 interview: Minimum 2 people and the Hiring Manager.

Example 2: Recruitment with 1 comparative evaluation and 1 interview: HR Analyst scores the comparative evaluation. A minimum of 2 people and the Hiring Manager for the interview.

Example 3: Recruitment with supplemental questions and 2 interviews, 3 scorers of the supplemental questions, 3 interviewers on the first panel, and 3 interviewers including the hiring manager on the second panel: 6-9 people total.

C. Schedule

It's best to schedule ample time to go through this plan. This is often **at least two separate meetings of 60-90 minutes each.** If this is your first time leading an EHP discussion, consider scheduling three meetings.

D. Facilitation

If you would like support on facilitating healthy and strategic conversations, email resji@cityofmadison.com for a consultation and check out [RESJI's Social Justice Facilitation Tips](#).

Before the first meeting, provide the following in the email invite to your team members. It will be important to key in on relevant areas and give further context as needed at the beginning of your meeting.

1. A copy of the Equitable Hiring Plan.
2. A copy of the draft posting from HR Analysts.
3. Neogov data from prior recruitment. Ask your HR Analyst for this data. Look for trends related to who advanced through each step of the hiring process previously. This may reveal opportunities for revision.
4. Optional: Industry-wide demographics. These can be found at www.Zippia.com. This data can highlight disparities industry-wide, or can provide a goal if other employers aren't experiencing similar underrepresentation.

E. Follow Up

After completing the EHP, the Hiring Manager sends it to their HR Analyst who may follow up with the Hiring Manager and Hiring Committee to discuss. Once it has been finalized, the HR Analyst will use that information to post the position. Once all phases of the hiring process are complete, the Hiring Manager should follow up with other hiring managers in your agency and appropriate staff to discuss lessons learned. This could positively influence how others make changes to their positions and hiring processes. We encourage you to share your process, outcomes, and lessons widely (such as unit/department meetings/committees, etc.).

Equitable hiring processes require a collective effort. It is important that Hiring Managers lead this process and thoughtfully work with their HR Analyst, EHP Hiring Committee Members, and their agency heads.

Additional Contacts

[Human Resources](#)
[Department of Civil Rights](#)
[Department Equity Teams](#)
[Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative](#)

When Recruiting for EHP Assistance, consider:

Who do you work with on committees and or team projects?

Who do you regularly work with from other city agencies?

Who have you connected with at trainings?

Who has a similar job at other city agencies or employers?

Who have you met in professional / community organizations?

Whose perspective would be important to include?

***It's important that the team understand impacts of racial and social disparities.**

PRO TIP

Do not rely on the same employees of color for EHPs. Repeatedly asking them to participate creates inequitable labor expectations for Black, Indigenous, People of Color employees. We encourage all staff to engage in equity learning opportunities (such as working on this tool) to sharpen their equity muscles!

PRO TIP

When facilitating an EHP, help participants move through **all** the sections. People can get stuck at times. It's OK to move on and circle back.

PRO TIP

Use the tool early in the hiring process.

You'll need time to recruit participants for the analysis. You'll also need time to implement changes to the position description, minimum qualifications, benchmarks, and interview questions.



Equitable Hiring Plan 3.0

A. Basic Information – Hiring Manager Completes ***Before*** the First Meeting

Hiring Manager: _____ Date: _____

HR Analyst: _____

Job Title Being Reviewed: _____

Equitable Hiring Plan Hiring Committee

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Minimum Qualifications

The hiring manager and the HR Analyst should have already prepared a draft set of minimum qualifications.
List them below.

Are there any local or federal requirements? What are the minimum qualifications for this same classification that have already used an equity lens? Are any of these trainable skills? For non-trainable skills, what [Skilled Through Alternative Routes \(STARs\)](#) might be a good fit for this role. For example, if the skill identified is project management, what are varied ways people might develop that skill?

Research shows that **hiring for skills is five times more predictive of job performance** than hiring for education, and it's more than twice as predictive as hiring based on work experience alone.

Who we are looking for is **not** a conversation about “good fit,” perceived sameness, or likeability. It’s about skills!

PRO
TIP

B. Position Essentials

Hiring manager: share context for the role, responsibilities, and dynamics of the team. Questions for discussion can include: “Who are we looking for?” and “What essential job skills are needed on day one that do not make sense to provide via training?” **Then review the draft Minimum Qualifications above and provide feedback if needed.**

● New Process ● New Process ● New Process ●

For external recruitments, upon request, all minimally qualified internal candidates may be included in your interview pool. Talk to your HR Analyst.

Internal vs. External Posting

We recommend external postings to increase opportunities for diverse candidate pools. Internal postings are appropriate if 1) the internal pool is diverse AND 2) there are limited promotional opportunities within the agency. Discuss with your HR Analyst any skills requirements that would necessitate an internal recruitment.

C. Evaluation (Testing, Interviews, and Assessments)

Evaluations provide information to filter down and rank the candidate pool. Based on these scores, HR will send you up to 10 ranks for underrepresented positions. We recommend you **use comparative evaluation for administrative and entry level positions. We recommend supplemental essays for roles that require writing as a core function of the job.**

Check out this overview of the Equitable Hiring Plan.

PRO
TIP

☐ **Comparative Evaluation:** short answer, checklists, and other responses collected at the time of applications. Responses are scored based on predetermined benchmark criteria related to the job functions of the position. **This is a good way to score candidates with a low barrier for providing responses.** Note: this method relies on applicants’ self-reporting skills and experiences. HR Analysts score.

☐ **Supplemental Essays:** essay responses are submitted at the time of application. Responses are scored by a panel of subject matter experts (SME). Primarily used for positions that require writing as a major job function. Scorers use predetermined benchmarks and candidates are ranked based on the average score. We recommend that questions are in plain language (request consultation through lap@cityofmadison.com) and a maximum of two questions with a word limit ranging from 250-500. Instead of supplemental essays you could use a targeted cover letter. Depending on the length, **these are often time intensive for both candidates and reviewers and extend your hiring timeline.**

C. Evaluation — Continued

If you are using computer skills testing, written exams, or random selection, check the appropriate box(es) and discuss with your HR Analyst to strategize ways to alleviate equity concerns.

- ☐ **Computer Skills Testing:** software testing is online. **It is time and labor intensive.**
- ☐ **Written Exams:** multiple-choice, short answer exams given in person. **These are time and labor intensive.**
- ☐ **Random Selection:** This is not recommended because it equalizes the playing field as opposed to using an equity lens. You risk rejecting exemplary candidates randomly. **We do not recommend this approach** unless there are no minimum qualifications and a very large applicant pool. Discussion with HR Analyst is required.
- ☐ **Bilingual Positions:** The City of Madison provides a pay differential for employees required to be bilingual as a function of their position. **This adds a \$2.00 pay differential to all hours worked for those employees.** To coordinate bilingual language proficiency tests, email lap@cityofmadison.com early in your planning.

Write questions for chosen evaluation method below:

- ☐ If you are **NOT** using an evaluation, check this box. How will you narrow the pool to 10 ranks or less?

Will the position include a bilingual benefit?

Yes: A bilingual candidate must fill this position.

Desirable, not required: This position could benefit from bilingual skills, but they are not required.

No: This position does not require bilingual skills.

Bilingual positions provide faster, more responsive service and can reduce vendor costs.

PRO TIP

D. Recruitment Strategy

Advertising the Position

How do you plan to reach underrepresented groups? In addition to the City's standard advertising, where and how will you recruit for this position?

Consult your HR Analyst or Department Equity Team members for sources to advertise to underrepresented demographics. Remember that authentic relationships are the best form of advertising. Encourage EHP participants to share the job posting in their networks.

● New Process ● New Process ● New Process ●

Make sure to check out [HR's Recruitment Strategy Guide](#) and align efforts!

E. Interview Questions and Benchmark Development

We've all had an interview in our life. They are ripe for inequities, but they don't have to be! What if we created an environment that was welcoming and inclusive?

Interviews are not only a reflection of the candidate, but of our work environment and culture at the City of Madison .

Look to **Appendix C** for examples of racial equity and social justice questions.

Benchmarking Best Practices

- Benchmarks should provide a clear standard for behaviors and skills required.
- Good benchmarks ensure you are asking only for the information needed to evaluate the candidate.
- Don't penalize candidates for not providing information beyond the scope of what is asked.
- **Don't use a complicated scoring system.** Rank answers as "inadequate /okay /great." Then have a group conversation.

Best Practices for Interview Questions

- Use behavioral questions: "share an example, describe a time, etc." These are designed to show how candidates have responded in the past as an indicator for future behaviors.
- Use the three components of a stellar question: 1) statement about desired quality 2) question, and 3) Can you share an example?
- Include at least one question related to racial equity and social justice. These should be weighted at the same level as the other interview questions. Look to **Appendix C** for examples.
- Don't ask more than 2 questions in one question. Use plain language.
- Don't ask a question to which there is only one right answer!

Remember, you're trying to encourage candidates to perform well, not find weaknesses!

Strong Interview Question

In this role it will be important to be open to feedback.

1) Describe a time you received constructive feedback.

2) How did you reflect on it and what changes did you make?

★ This is a good behavioral question because It shows growth.

Benchmarks:

Describes a time when they received constructive feedback; describes their response; describes reflection; describes changes

Weak Interview Question

Name one of your weaknesses.

This is a weak question as it's not based on previous behaviors, it's deficit based, and difficult to benchmark.

Scoring:

Inadequate: Does not meet expectations

OK: meets expectations

Great: exceeds expectations

PRO TIP

Best Practices For Interviewing Candidates

- Give candidates **15-30** minutes prior to the interview to review all questions.
- Assign someone as the **"Welcomer"** so they can thank the candidate for their time and facilitate introductions. Be kind! See **Appendix E** for Welcome Script.
- Assign questions to each hiring panel member beforehand. Be consistent in all areas. **It's okay and can be very helpful to ask follow up questions** if they didn't answer a part of the question or you need more details to be able to score. Just make sure to give every candidate that opportunity. Ensure there is enough time for candidates to ask questions.
- Be ready to share a hiring timeline and next steps.

There are two sides to an interview, the hiring committee members are being evaluated as well!

E. Interview Questions and Benchmark Development — Continued

List three behavioral questions and benchmarks targeted at learning more about the candidates' qualifications for key requirements. Remember, good interview questions include: 1) statement about desired quality 2) a question and 3) ask for an example.

A. What skill are we seeking? 1. What does a successful answer include?

B. What is our draft interview question? 2. How can we be more explicit in our question?

.....

A. What skill are we seeking? 1. What does a successful answer include?

B. What is our draft interview question? 2. How can we be more explicit in our question?

.....

A. What skill are we seeking? 1. What does a successful answer include?

B. What is our draft interview question? 2. How can we be more explicit in our question?

F. Conducting Interviews and Making a Selection

Successful Interview Process Steps

1. **Schedule a pre-interview** preparation meeting with steering committee to review process, questions, knowledge, skills and abilities, Equitable Hiring Plan recommendations, benchmarks, and decision-making process.

Expected date of pre-interview

2. **Identify a lead** on the panels who will introduce the interviews as well as talk about next steps/answer questions if able or refer to appropriate resources. This is especially important if the Hiring Manager is not participating in early rounds of the interviews.

Interview lead

3. Send out [HR's Interview Tips Sheet](#) to all panelists.
4. Schedule time post interviews to debrief with panelists on the process and get any suggestions for process improvement.

Making a Selection

- Ensure there is time for discussion. Don't use complicated scores, but actually have a discussion of why they are the top candidate.
- Be mindful of biases. We're not trying to find "good fits" we're trying to identify the individual with the skills (not perceived sameness) for the role. **Discuss "culture add" not "culture fit."**
- If you're hesitant about a candidate who made it to the last round and you're not sure they can do the job – why? Is bias at play here?

G. Recommendations

Are there lessons learned/items you discussed during this EHP process that you think should be applied to other positions in your agency or the city?

Final Steps ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Congratulations, you've almost completed the Equitable Hiring Plan for this recruitment. Thank you for your commitment to racial equity and social justice.

Please submit your EHP to your HR Analyst for review. They may reach out to ask questions and or share feedback or consult with the Equity and Social Justice Division Staff.

Questions, comments, feedback about this process? Contact: resji@cityofmadison.com

Appendices

Appendix A – Sample Supplemental or Cover Letter Questions

We recommend you ask one-two questions maximum for supplemental questions with each question having a one page limit.

A. The goal of reducing racial and social disparities that exist in our community is a high priority for the City of Madison. The City of Madison, including [department], will play vital roles in helping to reduce disparities and create equal outcomes for everyone.

In your experience, what concepts are important to consider when approaching work that will impact diverse populations and communities with high concentrations of people living with lower incomes? What specific experiences have you had that might prepare you for such work?

B. The [position name] will interact and collaborate with a diverse group of individuals and organizations. Such individuals and organizations may include youth, parents, residents living with lower incomes, school personnel, non-profit representatives, City staff and elected officials. Please describe one or more situations which required you to work collaboratively with a diverse group on a community project or issue. Include details of your role in planning, implementing and evaluating the initiative(s).

C. The [position title] will interact with a diverse group of individuals to solve problems. These groups and individuals may include City staff, neighborhood residents, property owners, social service agencies, and other impacted parties. Please describe one or more situations in which you have worked with a diverse group to resolve a difficult problem. Describe the approach you used, the principles that guided you, and the outcome.

Appendix B – Glossary

Equity | Equity is a deliberate prioritization of individuals and communities impacted by ongoing systemic injustice.

Red-Flagged | The Red-Flag Process is an Affirmative Action procedure adopted by the City in its Equity Action Plan to minimize cultural, racial, gender, and disability differences between interviewers and interviewees. It also provides a more thorough evaluation of candidates' application materials and interview responses.

Ranks | A rank is assigned based on the cumulative score from the examination process plus any seniority or veteran points applied (when applicable). The rank is where a candidate is placed on the eligible list and determines who moves forward to an interview based on referral rules.

Knowledge | Information acquired through education or experience about a subject.

Skills | The ability to perform a specific task effectively, demonstrated through actions and developed through practice and/or experience.

Abilities | The natural or learned capacity for doing something.

(Note: Not everyone is going to have the same level of natural ability to do something. Someone's natural ability can make it harder or easier to develop skills.)

Minimum Qualifications | A combination of education, training and/or work, and lived experience that can be demonstrated to result in possession of the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the duties of the position.

Appendix C – Sample Interview Questions

We have customized sample interview questions that prioritize racial equity and social justice based on the position you're recruiting for.

Supervisory Positions

Positions that have one or more direct reports

- A. The City of Madison and [department name] are committed to racial equity and social justice. We examine our day-to-day operations and their impacts with the goal of creating programs and policies that work for everyone. What professional and/or personal experiences demonstrate your ability to contribute to the city's goal of achieving racial equity and social justice?
- B. The City of Madison and [department name] are committed to racial equity and social justice. We examine our day-to-day operations and their impacts with the goal of creating programs and policies that work for everyone. Give us an example of how you work to create a sense of inclusion, belonging, and equity - with teams you have led or with colleagues?
- C. The City of Madison and [department name] are committed to racial equity and social justice. We examine our day-to-day operations and their impacts with the goal of creating programs and policies that work for everyone. Tell us about one or two specific actions that you have taken to advance racial equity and social justice in a previous role.
- D. The City of Madison and [department name] are committed to racial equity and social justice. We examine our day-to-day operations and their impacts with the goal of creating programs and policies that work for everyone. What steps have you taken to champion inclusion and belonging in your previous work experiences?
- E. The City of Madison and [department name] are committed to racial equity and social justice. We examine our day-to-day operations and their impacts with the goal of creating programs and policies that work for everyone. What challenges have you faced with regard to diversity, equity, and inclusion in your previous work? How did you address those challenges to create solutions? Please provide a specific example.

Positions with Public Contact

Positions that interact with community members on a regular basis

- A. Our community is diverse, and it's important that we effectively serve historically marginalized groups. Provide an example of a successful project you led or contributed to that included working with diverse communities. Describe the challenges that you worked through.
- B. It is important that we are inclusive and that we effectively serve all members of our increasingly diverse community. What is your approach to understanding the perspectives of co-workers and community members with backgrounds and experiences different than your own?
- C. How are racial equity and social justice important to this department from a broad perspective? Are there ways you think equity and inclusion could factor into the day to day operations of the department and specifically how they would be important to the position you are applying for?
- D. Through our various programs, we serve people of diverse backgrounds and experiences. Given this, how would you engage the public in ways that foster equity and inclusion?
- E. It's important for [department name] to incorporate equity and social justice into its daily activities. What are some ways of working on equity and inclusion in daily work?

Field, Technical, and Administrative Support Positions

Positions that spend 50% or greater of their time in the field, lab, or vehicle; or that provide administrative support without supervisory authority.

- A. It is important that we are inclusive and that we provide excellent customer service to our increasingly diverse community. What is your approach to understanding the perspectives of co-workers and customers with backgrounds and experiences different than your own?
- B. It is important that we are inclusive and that we provide excellent customer service to our increasingly diverse community. Tell us about a time when you changed your communication approach to work more effectively with a person from a background different from your own.
- C. It is important that we are inclusive and that we provide excellent customer service to our increasingly diverse community. Describe a time when you needed to work cooperatively with someone from a different background who did not have the same ideas as you. Describe the situation, the actions you took, and the outcome.
- D. It is important that we are inclusive and that we provide excellent customer service to our increasingly diverse community. Describe a time when you showed empathy toward an individual or group with a background different from your own. Describe the situation, the actions you took, and the outcome.
- E. It is important that we are inclusive and that we provide excellent customer service to our increasingly diverse community. What does it mean to you to be effective in an environment that values diversity and equity?

F. It is important that we are inclusive and that we provide excellent customer service to our increasingly diverse community. How has your background and experience prepared you to be effective in an environment that holds equity and inclusion as core to our mission and values?

G. The City of Madison and [department name] are committed to racial equity and social justice. We examine our day-to-day operations and their impacts with the goal of creating programs and policies that work for everyone. In this position, how would you demonstrate those values working with the public?

Policy Positions

Positions that are involved with creating and updating policies

- A. Please share your process for developing policies that center equity, inclusion, and belonging. Share an example.
- B. Please share with us what diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you and why they are important.
- C. Tell me about a time when you advocated for equity and inclusion that contributed to a policy change.
- D. In what ways do you think racial equity and social justice are important to someone in the role of [position title]. How would you demonstrate that commitment in this role?
- E. What does it mean to you to have a commitment to racial equity and social justice? How have you demonstrated that commitment in the past?

Appendix D – Resources

Human Resources EmployeeNet page for [Hiring Overview](#)

- [Red-Flag process basic overview](#)
- [Red-Flag detailed process](#)
- [Accommodations](#)
- [Position Description details](#)
- [Job Aid for Creating a Requisition](#)
- [NEOGOV Online Hiring Center User Guide \(requires network login\)](#)
- [Talent Acquisition Plan](#)
- [Recruitment Strategy Guide](#)
- [Interview Tips Handout](#)
- [Virtual Interviewing Tips Guide](#)
- [Manager's Guide to Interviews and Background Checks](#)
- [Job Aid for Setting up Self-Schedule Interviews](#)

Appendix E – Welcome Script for Interviewing Candidates

Welcome! Thank you for your interest in the [position] with the [department/division]. Today's interview will be [x] minutes. After brief introductions from the panelists and yourself, we'll ask 5 interview questions you should have received [x] minutes beforehand. Feel free to refer to the document we've shared with you and or ask us to repeat the question. We ask that you manage your time appropriately to be able to answer all the questions in the allocated time. There may be pauses between questions, which just gives each panelist members time to jot down any notes they have. Do you have any questions? Great, let's get started with introductions: name, title and or department, and pronouns if you are comfortable. [Begin with panelists, then candidate].