WHY CHECK REFERENCES?

References help you get the full picture of the candidate's skills, work habits and personality. They serve as an important tool to evaluate a candidate's fit with your job and organization.

REFERENCE CHECKING TIPS

PRIOR TO MAKING THE CONTACT

- Review the questions on the Reference Check Sheet (see reverse). Add any questions specific to your job.
- Determine who you will contact for reference.
- Ideally, it is helpful to get references from a combination of people who can discuss the candidate's skills and work habits (e.g., prior supervisors, peers, subordinates and clients).
- At a minimum, contact the applicant's current or most recent supervisor. *At an earlier stage (during the interview), you should have informed your candidates that you might be contacting their current/previous supervisors for references. If your candidate requested to be contacted prior to you calling, respect and follow up on that request.*

DURING THE CONTACT

- Start by asking straightforward employment facts (dates of employment, title, etc.), then move on to more open-ended questions.
- Be friendly and conversational when talking with a reference giver to help them feel more comfortable. Be attentive to a person's style and tone of voice.
- Use a behavior-based approach to focus on a candidate's past performance in specific situations (Example: "Tell me about a time when….").
- Take notes using the Reference Check Sheet.

POST CONTACT

- Review your notes. Does anything particular stand out (good or bad)?
- For additional assistance regarding checking references, please contact your Human Resources (HR) professional.

REFERENCE CHECK SHEET

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Applicant Name _____

Position Applied _____

REFERENCE CHECK CONDUCTED BY

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

REFERENCE CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact Name & Title _____

Contact's Organization _____ Phone _____

Relationship to Candidate _____

REFERENCE QUESTIONS

What position did applicant hold with your organization?

What were the approximate dates of employment?

Describe the duties the applicant performed in this position.

How would you describe the applicant's overall performance?

What duties did applicant perform the best?

What areas could have been improved?

How well did the applicant get along with coworkers/team members?

Describe the most important duties of the position that you are filling and then ask the person giving the reference how they think the applicant would perform in such a job.

What was the reason/desire for leaving?

Would you re-employ? If not, why?

Other questions?