

# **A Guide to Hiring Your Administrator**



**Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities**

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# INTRODUCTION – HIRING YOUR ADMINISTRATOR

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All municipalities, at one time or another, will be faced with the resignation or retirement of their Administrator. Given the key role the Administrator has in the municipality, the process of replacing an experienced Administrator – someone who has become extremely knowledgeable about your municipality over the years – can be daunting.

Councils should approach this challenge positively. Highly qualified people with the core skills required for an Administrator do exist and can be found from many walks of life – all the municipality has to do is find that one right person. *A Guide to Hiring Your Administrator* offers practical advice on the process for hiring a new Administrator.

## **Taking Stock**

The resignation or retirement of your Administrator presents a good opportunity to take stock of your municipality. Before embarking on the process of hiring a new Administrator, councils need to step back and gauge the municipality's strengths and understand its challenges. Where does council want the municipality to be in five or ten years, and what is council's vision? How can the municipality be positioned for the future? What type of skills would a new Administrator need to move the municipality forward?

Council may determine, based on the results of their review, that it wants to explore options for restructuring. Restructuring can help municipalities capture future opportunities and ensure the long-term health of their municipality. Restructuring can take many forms, including changing the way services are delivered (for example sharing an Administrator with another municipality) or even merging with another municipality.

Section 110 of *The Municipalities Act* provides the statutory requirement for the position of administrator of municipalities.

- 110(1)** Every council shall establish a position of administrator of the municipality.
- (2) A person who holds the position of administrator of the municipality must:
  - (a) in the case of an administrator of a municipality other than a rural municipality, be qualified as required by *The Urban Municipal Administrators Act*; or
  - (b) in the case of a rural municipality, be qualified as required by *The Rural Municipal Administrators Act*.
- (3) The administrator shall perform the duties and exercise the powers and functions that are assigned to an administrator:
  - (a) by this and other Acts: and

(b) by the council

(4) Subject to the approval of the council, an administrator may delegate any of his or her powers, duties or functions to any employee of the municipality.

(5) A council may appoint a person to fill the position of administrator of the municipality in an acting capacity if for any reason the administrator is unable to act for a period of not more than three months or any longer period that the board of examiners may allow.

(6) In this section, board of examiners means the board of examiners established pursuant to an agreement mentioned in section 16 of *Urban Municipal Administrators Act* or section 11 of *The Rural Municipal Administrators Act*, as the case may be.

**114** The appointment of a person to the position of administrator or as a full-time municipal solicitor may be made, suspended or revoked only if the majority of council vote to do so.

## **Embarking on a Recruitment Process**

Council's decision to hire a new Administrator means development and implementation of a recruitment process to ensure that the best person possible for your municipality is hired to the position. The best person will have the qualifications council is looking for, but more importantly, will possess the necessary skills to take the municipality in the direction council has chosen for the future.

*A Guide to Hiring Your Administrator* outlines the critical steps that are necessary in the recruitment process. While municipalities will want to develop a recruitment process that is tailored for their particular circumstances, each of these critical steps should be undertaken:

### **Step 1 – Determining the Responsibilities and Requirements of an Administrator**

Developing a position description that clearly defines the duties and responsibilities, together with the results the Administrator will be expected to deliver, is the critical first step.

### **Step 2 – Recruiting for the Position**

Targeting potential candidates, developing an effective Administrator job advertisement and evaluating options for advertising are keys to successful recruitment.

### **Step 3 – Screening Applicants and Conducting Interviews**

The screening and interview processes are critical steps in choosing the right person for the Administrator job. This is the municipality's opportunity to evaluate whether prospective candidates possess the core and any additional skills required for the job.

#### **Step 4 – Checking References and Making a Job Offer**

The reference check is the final critical step in the hiring process before making a job offer.

**Remember – a strong and successful municipality relies on its Administrator. A well-developed recruitment process ensures you hire a person who possesses the core skills your municipality needs now and into the future.**

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# STEP 1 – DETERMINING THE RESPONSIBILITIES & REQUIREMENTS OF AN ADMINISTRATOR

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## **1.1 - Developing an Administrator Position Description**

Developing a position description that clearly defines the duties and responsibilities of the Administrator is the first step in a successful recruitment process. An effective job description clearly defines the responsibilities of the job, as well as the results the Administrator will be expected to deliver, and should be relevant over time.

One of the most important aspects of good municipal government is an effective working relationship between council and the administration. Understanding how the administration of your municipality works assists municipal council members to carry out their role.

The administration or the employees, look after the day to day operations of the municipality. The key role of council is to provide leadership and set policy. The administrator is a policy advisor and ensures council's policies are carried out. It is important for staff to keep council informed and up to date on current and impending issues. The experience and knowledge of municipal administration and staff may enable council members to do their job more efficiently.

In rural municipalities, administrators must be qualified as required by *The Rural Municipal Administrators Act*. Certification of administrators is the responsibility of the *Board of Examiners*. The *Board of Examiners* consists of one person appointed by RMAA, one person by SARM and one or more persons appointed jointly by RMAA and SARM. Further information on certification of administrators can be obtained from the secretary of the *Board of Examiners*. The secretary's name and contact information can be obtained from the SARM office or from the Executive Director of RMAA.

An administrator is required to perform the duties and functions required by *The Municipalities Act*, other legislation and other duties that may be assigned by council.

## **Core Administrator Duties and Responsibilities**

The Administrator has specific duties and responsibilities, which are outlined in *The Municipalities Act*. The Administrator will either directly perform these, or will delegate them to another staff member, depending on the municipality's size. Regardless of how these duties and responsibilities are carried out, the Administrator always remains responsible under the Act.

Section 111 of *The Municipalities Act* outlines the statutory duties of the administrator.

**111(1)** The Administrator shall take charge of and safely keep all books, documents and records of the municipality that are committed to his or her charge and shall:

- (a) produce, when called for by the council, auditor, minister or other competent authority, all books, vouchers, papers and moneys belonging to the municipality; and
  - (b) on ceasing to hold office, deliver all books, vouchers, papers and moneys belonging to the municipality to his or her successor in office or to any other person that the council may designate.
- (2) The administrator shall ensure that:
- (a) all minutes of council meetings are recorded;
  - (b) the names of the members of council present at council meetings are recorded;
  - (c) the minutes of each council meeting are given to council for approval at the next regular council meeting;
  - (d) the corporate seal of the municipality, bylaws and minutes of council meetings and other records and documents, funds and securities of the municipality are kept safe;
  - (e) the council is advised of its legislative responsibilities pursuant to this or any other Act;
  - (f) the minister is sent any statements, reports or other information with regard to the municipality that may be required by the minister to this or any other Act;
  - (g) the official correspondence of the council is carried out in accordance with council's directions;
  - (h) an indexed register containing certified copies of all bylaws of the municipality is maintained;
  - (i) cash collections that have accumulated to the amount determined by the council that is equal to or less than the amount for which the administrator is bonded or insured, but in any case not less than once a month nor more than once each day, are deposited in the name of the municipality in a bank or credit union designated by the council, of which the administrator may not be an employee;
  - (j) the funds of the municipality are disbursed only in the manner and to those persons that are directed by law or by the bylaws or resolutions of the council;
  - (k) a complete and accurate account of assets and liabilities and all transactions affecting the financial position of the municipality is maintained in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles;
  - (l) the financial statements and information that the council may, by resolution, request are submitted to the council;
  - (m) on or before June 1 in each year, a financial statement is completed as required by section 185.

## **Administration:**

The Administrator is the administrative head of the municipality and is responsible for the overall administration of the municipality including:

- **Meetings of Council** – preparing and organizing all meeting agendas; recording the minutes of all municipal meetings; and providing council with sound advice on all aspects of municipal governance and legislative requirements.
- **By-laws** – ensuring all required bylaws and resolutions are in-place and up-to-date; preparing resolutions and by-laws for the municipality.
- **Implementing council priorities** – ensuring the policies, programs and services of the municipality are implemented; monitoring, evaluating and reporting back to council on the policies, programs and services of the municipality; and answering all public requests, inquiries and / or complaints, and ensuring a high standard of customer service.

## **Financial Management:**

Sound financial management is critical to the successful operation of the municipality. The duties of the Administrator in this regard are far reaching, including:

- **Preparing the annual financial plan** – presenting options for the annual operating and capital budgets for council's consideration.
- **Monitoring the financial plan** – preparing the monthly financial statements, an annual financial statement and cash flow projections as required.
- **Controlling** – the day-to-day accounting i.e. the accounts payable, accounts receivable, tax collections, payroll, monthly bank reconciliations and investments. This also includes ensuring that accurate records and books are kept of all of the financial affairs of the municipality, and making adjustments, as required, to the municipality's financial plan.
- **Reporting** – providing council with up-to-date financial information on a regular and timely basis, ensuring that exceptions and issues are clearly identified, providing the Province with financial information and reports as required by legislation / agreements, working with the auditors when they are conducting the annual financial audit of the municipality and providing financial information to the public as required.
- **Taxation process** – administering the entire taxation process, including the property assessment process, levying and collection of taxes and the tax enforcement process.



### **Human Resource Management:**

The Administrator works with council in the management and supervision of the employees of the municipality. Specific duties may include:

- **Recruitment and development of employees** – including hiring, training, evaluating, promoting and dismissing employees.
- **Conducting union negotiations.**
- **Developing a human resource recruitment / retention plan.**

### **Additional Administrator Duties**

Additional duties of the administrator will depend on the particular needs of your municipality based on its size, structure, vision and long-term plans. The administrator may have additional duties relating to:

- **Economic Development.**
- **Delivery of recreation programs and services.**
- **Project Implementation,** for example the implementation of a new public utility system; i.e. a rural water line project.

## **1.2 – Sample Administrator Position Description**

### **Position Description – ADMINISTRATOR**

The Administrator is the chief administrative officer of the municipality. This position is responsible to council for the overall administration, financial management and human resource management of the municipality.

The Administrator oversees the implementation and delivery of programs and services that are approved by council and ensures that these programs and services are delivered to all residents and ratepayers in a manner that makes efficient and effective use of the human, financial and physical resources of the municipality.

The administrator is the principal advisor to council and is responsible for ensuring that council is informed of their legislative responsibilities and authorities and all other relevant information necessary to make informed decisions on every municipal matter.

#### **Responsibilities and Duties:**

##### **Administration:**

- Prepare and organize the agendas for all municipal meetings and ensure that agenda packages are provided to each member of council prior to each meeting in a timely manner.
- Prepare the resolutions and by-laws for meetings of council and attend all regular, special, and committee meetings.
- Prepare, circulate and post the meeting minutes in a timely manner
- Ensure all required by-laws and resolutions are in-place and up-to-date and readily available for public review.
- Ensure all the records of the municipality are retained in accordance with the requirements of the legislation.
- Complete all documents, agreements, or contracts approved by council; prepare correspondence resulting from decisions of council, and delegate tasks as appropriate.
- **Policies/Programs/Service Delivery**
  - Monitor, evaluate and recommend changes to municipal policies and programs on an on-going basis, to ensure ongoing relevancy and effectiveness.

### **Position Description – ADMINISTRATOR (continued)**

- Recommend to council new initiatives, changes to programs / services, or changes to the organizational structure that will improve efficiency or service delivery.
- Answer all public requests, inquiries and / or complaints, ensuring a high standard of service to ratepayers and citizens.
- Responsible for the overall administration of the municipality in accordance with plans, policies, programs, by-laws and regulations established by elected officials and by various provincial statutes.
- Develop and promote a strong working relationship with council, understanding and respecting the specific role distinction of council and management.

#### **Financial Management:**

- Prepare and present options for the annual financial plan for council's consideration, including the general operating and capital budgets.
- Monitor the financial plan, including the preparation of monthly financial statements and annual financial statement and cash flow projections as required.
- Provide council with up-to-date financial information on a regular and timely basis; identifying any exceptions, and as necessary, options to manage exceptions.
- Ensure that accurate records and books are kept of all the financial affairs of the municipality, i.e. accounts payable, accounts receivable, tax collections, payroll, monthly bank reconciliations and investments.
- Ensure that all municipal expenditures receive necessary approval before payment is issued.
- Provide the Province with financial information and reports as required by legislation, agreements, or as requested.
- Ensure that all required records and books are available to the municipality's auditor when required.
- Administer the property assessment and taxation processes including the collection of taxes.

#### **Human Resource Management:**

- Responsible for managing all municipal employees.

### **1.3 – Core Skills**

All Administrators must have specific core skills (also known as competencies) in order to perform their duties and responsibilities successfully. These competencies are attained through a combination of education; professional training and certification; and previous work experience.

Depending on what the municipality's specific needs are, some skills will be of greater interest than others – some municipalities may also seek additional skills not listed below.

Core skills of an Administrator include:

**Technical Skills** – knowledge of municipal administration, financial management and past experience working with municipal law. Depending on the municipality's needs, additional technical skills (e.g. knowledge of land-use planning), may be required.

**Communication Skills** – ability to express themselves clearly in conversations and interactions with others; express themselves clearly in business writing; and plan and deliver oral and written communications that make an impact and persuade their intended audience.

**Analytical and Problem-Solving Skills** – ability to tackle a problem by using a logical and systemic approach; anticipate the implications and consequences of situations and take appropriate action; and analyze the municipality's competitive position, including its strengths and weaknesses.

**Leadership Skills** – ability to work co-operatively with others to produce innovative solutions; take the lead in setting new partnerships, policies or procedures; delegate responsibility and coach other municipal employees to develop their capabilities.

**Managing Change Skills** – ability to demonstrate support for innovation and for organizational changes needed to improve the municipality's effectiveness; initiate, sponsor and implement organizational change; and help others to successfully manage organizational change.

**Goal-Oriented Skills** – ability to focus on the desired result of their work, and set challenging goals for other municipal employees. The Administrator must seize positive opportunities that will benefit the municipality.

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## STEP 2 - RECRUITING FOR THE POSITION

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### 2.1 - Targeting Potential Candidates

Potential candidates – those who possess the core competencies for the Administrator position – can be recruited from several places. Most commonly, they will come from:

- **Within the municipality.** Always look within your own municipality to see if there is someone who would welcome and benefit from increased responsibility.
- **Other Municipalities or Local Authorities.** Qualified people may be recruited from other municipalities, regional health authorities, school divisions, economic/regional economic development authorities, etc.
- **The Private Sector or Other Levels of Government.** Qualified individuals may include accounting and finance professionals, or public administration, business administration or other university or college graduates working in the public or private sector.
- **Other Provinces.** Be sure to target qualified individuals from other provinces as well.

### 2.2 - Developing an Administrator Advertisement

An effective administrator advertisement highlights the qualities of the job that are most likely to appeal to the reader and will encourage an interested person to take the next step of applying for the position. The administrator advertisement is more than a simple classified advertisement – it has to attract attention in order to get a good response.

An effective advertisement will include the core skills that are required of the candidate, as well as all the pluses about the job and the municipality.

Ensure the following components are included in the Administrator advertisement:

**Job Title.** The headline must be catchy and should make the reader interested to read further and apply for the position. For example:

**Administrator – Leadership for a Strong Community**

**Position Description.** The reader needs to know if the position is a good fit, just as council needs to know the person is a good fit for the municipality. Outline the duties and responsibilities, and excite the reader by talking about what they will be doing, rather than what experience is necessary. For example:

### **Administrator – Leadership for a Strong Community**

Your impact on the municipality will be significant in several ways:

**Administration:** You will organize and attend all council meetings, ensure by-laws and resolutions are in place and up to date, recommend new initiatives to council and implement council priorities.

**Financial management:** You will prepare and monitor the annual financial plan, including the general operating & capital budgets and administer the entire taxation process.

**Human Resource Management:** You will work with council in the recruitment and management of municipal employees.

**Core Skills Required.** To have the best candidate pool to choose from, do not list a large number of mandatory skills. There will be time to separate the ideal candidates (those with the core competencies) from the others later during the screening process. Advertisements are best when they are specific enough to keep the candidate wanting to know more about the position, but not so specific that people rule themselves out. Include any necessary educational requirements. For example:

Ideally, you will possess technical skills in municipal administration, financial management and human resource management. Strong communication, analytical, and leadership skills are just some of the requirements of the position. Desired candidates will have post-secondary education in a relevant discipline.

**What the Municipality & Community Offers.** The advertisement should promote the municipality and community as a desirable place to live and work – never assume people know this. Instead, use your advertisement as a public relations vehicle to send the message that the municipality is progressive, professional and a terrific place to live and work. For example:

There will be opportunities to stretch your skills by contributing to the advancement of the municipality's economic development plan. Further professional development will be offered in order to ensure your success.

The Rural Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_ is a progressive municipality with mixed farming, value-added processing and oil & gas wells located in southeast Saskatchewan. The RM office is in the Town of \_\_\_\_\_, which has excellent medical, educational and recreational facilities.

**Salary.** Mentioning salary is important to attracting candidates. It is thought that advertisements that make no mention of salary receive a lower response rate than advertisements that do. The municipality can also include a salary range. For example:

The RM uses the RMAA Salary Schedule as a guide; the right candidate can expect a salary and benefits package that reflects their level of experience.

**Encourage a Response.** The response rate can be increased by how the applicants are asked to respond. Consider asking applicants to respond via regular mail or email. If applicable, be sure to list the municipal website, so applicants can learn more. For example:

Forward resume and cover letter to the Rural Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ at Box 456, \_\_\_\_\_ or email [municipality@sasktel.ca](mailto:municipality@sasktel.ca).

For more information on the RM of \_\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_ and a complete description of this exciting opportunity, visit us at [www.municipality.ca](http://www.municipality.ca) or call (306)999-8888.

*We thank all who apply and advise that only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.*

## **2.3 – Sample Advertisement**

### **Administrator – Leadership for a Strong Community**

Your impact on the municipality will be significant in several ways:

- Administration: You will organize and attend all council meetings, ensure bylaws and resolutions are in place and up to date, recommend new initiatives to council and implement council priorities.
- Financial management: You will prepare and monitor the annual financial plan, including the general operating & capital budgets and administer the entire taxation process.
- Human Resource Management: You will work with council in the recruitment and management of municipal employees.

Ideally, you will possess technical skills in municipal administration, financial management and human resource management. Strong communication, analytical, and leadership skills are just some of the requirements of the position. Desired candidates will have post-secondary education in a relevant discipline.

There will be opportunities to stretch your skills by contributing to the advancement of the municipality's economic development plan. Further professional development will be offered in order to ensure your success.

The Rural Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_ is a progressive municipality with mixed farming, value-added processing and oil & gas wells located in southeast Saskatchewan. The RM office is in the Town of \_\_\_\_\_, which has excellent medical, educational and recreational facilities.

The RM uses the RMAA Salary Schedule as a guide; the right candidate can expect a salary and benefits package that reflects their level of experience.

Forward resume and cover letter to the Rural Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ at Box 456, \_\_\_\_\_ or email [municipality@sasktel.ca](mailto:municipality@sasktel.ca).

For more information on the RM of \_\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_ and a complete description of this exciting opportunity, visit us at [www.municipality.ca](http://www.municipality.ca) or call (306)999-8888.

*We thank all who apply and advise that only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.*



## **2.4 – Advertising Options**

How does council go about recruiting qualified candidates? There are a variety of options for advertising the Administrator position. Advertising in a newspaper is a good place to start, but there are several advertising options which can significantly enhance the advertisement's reach and ensure you have the widest pool of qualified candidates to choose from. Consider the following ideas when deciding where to advertise:

- **Newspapers.** Consider local and regional newspapers, as well as newspapers that have a broad, provincial reach, like *The Leader-Post* and *The StarPhoenix*. The advertisement will have to be shortened to fit the amount of space that is affordable. A good strategy when using a newspaper advertisement is to provide a link to a website, where a more detailed advertisement can be posted. At the end of the newspaper advertisement, simply note the website address where the detailed advertisement can be found.
- **Post the position throughout the municipality**, for example, in the local restaurant, hotel, recreation centre, library, or municipal office.
- Advertise on your **municipality's website**. Advertising the Administrator job on the Internet is an excellent way to reach a large audience, allows the municipality to use all the space needed to sell the job, and costs nothing.
- Send your advertisement to all rural municipalities by utilizing **SARM's group email service**. For a small fee SARM will send your advertisement to all the rural municipalities in the province.
- Advertise on **other key websites**, including:
  - **The SARM website** - [www.sarm.ca](http://www.sarm.ca)
  - **Other provincial municipal associations**
    - Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) – [www.suma.org](http://www.suma.org)
    - Association of Manitoba Municipalities - [www.amm.mb.ca](http://www.amm.mb.ca)
    - Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties - [www.aamdc.com](http://www.aamdc.com)
- **Network** with people in other municipalities, the provincial government, or other organizations to find out whether they know of any qualified candidates. Word of mouth is a great way to attract candidates.
- Advertise with **job sites** (Internet job websites), like [workopolis.com](http://workopolis.com).
- Employ an **executive search company**. While this is typically a more costly option, such companies have expertise in recruiting at senior levels.

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## **STEP 3 - SCREENING APPLICANTS & CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS**

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### **3.1 - Screening Applicants**

When the Administrator position advertisement deadline has passed, the next step is to screen the applicants. Although this step is time-consuming, it is extremely critical because it will help you determine your list of “must-talk-to” candidates and save you time and money because you will target the right people for an interview. Remember that hiring the wrong person is costly, as well as the recruitment process itself, and a well-planned and executed screening and interview process will help to reduce hiring mistakes and costs to municipalities.

#### **Who Screens:**

Municipalities have different practices regarding the responsibility for screening applicants and hiring decisions. In some cases a personnel committee, comprising 2 or 3 members of council, screens applicants and makes recommendations for interviews. In the majority of cases, all members of council are involved in the process. The Administrator will be working with all of council and everyone should have the opportunity to evaluate the candidates before a final decision is made.

#### **Organizing the Screening Process:**

The selection of an Administrator is all about prioritizing the applicants. Develop a checklist that lists out all the core skills needed for the job (e.g. technical skills in administration, financial management, and human resource management; communication skills; analytical skills; leadership skills, etc.) and any other additional skills. When reviewing resumes, it is important to highlight when the applicant’s skills, as shown on their resume, match up with the core / additional skills needed for the job. Using the checklist process, the personnel committee should be able to distinguish the candidates they are interested in interviewing.

## Sample Screening Checklist

<u>Core and Additional Skills</u>	Applicant # 1	Applicant # 2	Applicant # 3	Applicant # 4	Applicant # 5	Applicant # 6	Applicant # 7	Applicant # 8	Applicant # 9	Applicant # 10	Applicant # 11	Applicant # 12
<b>Administration</b>												
<b>Financial Management</b>												
<b>Human Resource Management</b>												
<b>Communication</b>												
<b>Analytical / Problem-Solving</b>												
<b>Leadership</b>												
<b>Managing Change</b>												
<b>Goal-Oriented</b>												
<b>Additional Skills</b>												
<b>Additional Skills</b>												

### **Limiting the Number of Candidates:**

There is no hard and fast rule about the right number of candidates to interview – if the municipality needs an Administrator, council will need to interview as many candidates as necessary to find the right person. A general rule of thumb for interviewing is no more than 6 interviews in an 8 hour day. This ensures adequate time is given to each interview and provides the interviewers with time to discuss and compare notes and observations.

Using the screening process, a candidate who has the core skills listed on their resume (and adequate experience using these skills) should be considered for an interview. Generally you will want to select a manageable number of candidates to interview based on the number of candidates that apply for the position.

### **3.2 – Developing Interview Questions**

The job interview is what is relied on most heavily in making hiring decisions. Successful interview practices will help uncover a candidate’s knowledge and capabilities as well as areas needing improvement – all of which are important when making critical hiring decisions.

Questions should be prepared well in advance and should be developed to reveal a candidate’s technical skills, knowledge, behaviours, and key motivators. It is not enough to know whether a candidate can do the job. It is equally important to know whether the person will be a good fit for the municipality and whether the candidate will be motivated to do the job.

Good interviewers ask probing questions to determine if the candidate is absolutely the right choice and can do the job. Often, interviewers ask hypothetical questions of the candidate – however, these questions sometimes lead to answers that are not based on past performance, but on what the candidate thinks is the right answer. As well, try to avoid closed questions that call for one-word answers. Questions that begin with “tell me about,” or “describe a time,” and “give me an example” will provide much more information.

There are some questions that are not permitted to be asked at an interview. The Human Rights Code provides that questions of a personal nature (i.e. marital status, age, political beliefs) may not be asked in a job interview. When thinking about whether a question is appropriate, council should first ask itself – does the question have anything to do with the job? For more information, contact the:

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission

[www.shrc.gov.sk.ca](http://www.shrc.gov.sk.ca)

Regina 1-800-667-8577 – Saskatoon 1-800-667-9249

### **3.3 - Sample Interview Questions**

The following are sample interview questions that are based on the core skills required for an Administrator.

#### **Technical Skills**

##### **Administration**

1. Please highlight those aspects of your background (education and experience) that you feel have prepared you for the position of Administrator, and that make you the right candidate for the position.
2. Think of a time when you had many challenging projects with different priorities to manage. Tell us about it.
3. Please explain how you view the role of council versus the role of the administrator.
4. How would you deal with a situation where one or two council members were making specific demands, but council has not authorized you to take action concerning these demands?
5. There is increasingly greater public expectation that municipalities should be held publicly accountable. How would you respond to public demands for greater accountability? How would you deal with an angry member of the public who is upset with the municipality?

## **Technical Skills (continued)**

### **Financial Management**

1. Financial issues or problems often arise in a municipality because appropriate internal controls and monitoring mechanisms are not in place. Tell us about experiences you have had with the implementation of internal controls and financial monitoring, especially where these controls may not have been adequate.
2. Council is ultimately responsible to its ratepayers for the financial position of the municipality. Understanding financial information and making sound financial decisions can be difficult without financial training or background. However, it is the Administrator's responsibility to ensure appropriate reporting is in place to facilitate sound decision making. Tell us, as an Administrator, what financial information you would report on to council, how frequently you would report and how you would present the information in an understandable way so that council has the relevant facts to make sound financial decisions.

### **Human Resource Management**

1. Administrators are often called upon to mediate disputes, which may arise within a municipality involving staff, councillors, or ratepayers and sometimes between two municipalities. Tell us about experiences that you have had mediating a dispute, your role, how you approached it and the outcome.
2. Have you ever been involved with introducing any new ideas or programs into your organization? Tell us about the program, and describe the steps you used to improve the acceptance for the program.
3. What is the most difficult management situation that you have had to handle in the past few years?
4. How would you describe yourself and your management style? How would you produce a working environment that supports maximum productivity? Please relate your response to your working experience.

### **Communication Skills**

1. Tell us about a time when you had to be assertive to get across a point that was important to you.
2. Describe a complex process, product, situation or rule that you had to explain to someone. How did you know you were successful in getting your point across?
3. Could you comment on your experience operating in a high public profile environment, dealing with the media, presenting and defending controversial issues?
4. Describe a report or proposal that you wrote that was very effective. How did you know? What was the outcome?
5. How do you keep staff aware of information and municipal activities that might affect them?

### **Analytical and Problem-Solving Skills**

1. What kinds of problems do you deal with in your current job? How do you address them? Share some examples.
2. Tell us about a time that you came up with a solution to a problem that others had not been able to solve in quite a while.
3. What has been the most difficult management situation that you have had to handle in the past few years?
4. Tell us about a complex problem that you solved recently. How did you decide what to do? What were the key elements that you considered? What was the outcome?

### **Leadership Skills**

1. Describe a recent initiative that you led. What obstacles did you face in reaching your goals? How did you overcome them?
2. How do you describe yourself and your management style? How would you produce an environment that supports maximum productivity? Please relate your response to your working experience.
3. Have you ever been in a leadership role where major change is taking place in the organization? How did you approach your part in it, and what are some of the key considerations in successfully introducing change?
4. Describe a group you led whose members did not work well together. What did you do to improve teamwork?
5. Share an experience in which you had to lead a technical team whose members had more expertise than you had. How did you deal with that?

### **Managing Change Skills**

1. Describe a situation in which you anticipated the future and made changes to current services to meet future needs.
2. Give us an example of when you identified and assessed a new business opportunity.
3. Tell us about a time when you were surprised by a change at work. How did you deal with it?
4. Tell us about a time when you did not deal well with a change. What prevented you? What could you have done differently? What was the outcome?
5. Give us an example when you had to change a plan or approach that you were committed to. How did you feel, and how did you explain the change to your staff or the public?

### Goal-Oriented Skills

1. Tell us about a recent goal that you set and achieved. Walk us through your thinking and planning process.
2. Give us an example of a goal that you did not reach. How did you feel about that? What could you have done differently?
3. Think of a job that you held where your goals were not clearly defined. What did you do about it?
4. How do you motivate your staff?

## **3.4 – Structuring the Interview**

To ensure the interview time is used most efficiently, prepare for the interview in advance. The council should meet in advance to go over the questions and clarify how the interview will proceed. A recommended interview structure, to help keep the interview focused and on track in order to get the results needed to make a proper evaluation of each candidate, is provided below.

### **Introduction:**

**Build rapport.** Always make the candidate comfortable and relaxed by using conversation openers and asking ice-breaker questions, such as “tell me about yourself.” Show a genuine interest and give each candidate your full attention by conducting the interview in a quiet, private space with the door closed. Ask others not to interrupt during the interview.

**Provide background information.** Give the candidate background information about the Administrator position and the municipality.

**Communicate expectations.** Inform the candidate you will be asking questions first, that you will be taking notes, and that you will allow time at the end for their questions. Explain that you will be asking questions to get specific examples, and that in each case you want to hear about the situation, the actions the candidates took, and the end results. Tell the candidate if an actual situation does not come right to mind, you will allow them time to think, or you will come back to the question. Ask the candidate if they have any questions before proceeding.



## **Interviewer's Questions / Candidate's Answers:**

This is the part of the interview where you will gather the most information, so take good notes. As noted previously, ask questions that get the candidate to demonstrate their competency in the core skills needed for the job. Pace yourself according to the number of core skills you have identified, and ask about two or three questions for each core skill. **Your objective is to find evidence that a candidate has the core skills needed to do the job and any additional skills that the municipality believes are an asset for the position.** Make sure the candidate does most of the talking during this phase.

## **Candidate's Questions:**

Leave enough time to answer the candidate's questions. Most candidates have prepared questions to show that they are very interested in the position.

## **Interview Close:**

**Sell the municipality.** This is the time to sell the benefits of working for the municipality. It is important that you leave each candidate with a positive impression.

**Communicate the next steps.** Candidates want to know the next steps of the interview process and when they will hear from you. Let them know what to expect, and thank them for their time.

### Interview Tips

The following provides some tips for common road-blocks that occur during an interview.

**Keeping the candidate on track.** The person asking the questions controls and directs the flow. If a candidate does not answer a question with the information council is seeking, re-phrase the question. For example, if the candidate is asked what personal qualities are necessary for success and answers, “you need at least 3 years of experience in financial management,” try putting the candidate back on track by being gently persistent: “Perhaps I didn’t make myself clear; I meant what personal qualities are necessary for success, not what kind of experience.”

**The flustered candidate.** What if a candidate is stumped on a question? The interviewers may be inclined to let them off the hook with, “that’s alright, let’s move on.” This is the wrong approach, because you still need an answer to the question. Try saying, “that’s alright, take your time to answer, I’m sure something will come to you.” If the candidate still draws a blank, move onto another question and return to the question when the candidate appears more relaxed.

**The talkative candidate.** The challenge with a talkative candidate is to guide the interview to gather information needed to make a hiring decision. You can handle a talkative candidate by either:

- Jump into the conversation with “You know, that’s very interesting. It makes me want to ask you about...” and then move onto the next topic.
- Start talking along with the candidate and redirect the conversation to a new area. Keep talking until the candidate stops, which should be in the first few seconds.

## 3.5 - Evaluating the Interview

During the interview, each member of council should take notes of the candidate’s responses to the questions. Accurate and detailed notes on answers will enable them to more effectively evaluate the candidate’s responses. It is easy to think that interviewers will remember each response, but it is hard to do after a long day of interviewing.

The interview schedule can be set up in such a way as to provide space to take notes on the responses to each question. For example:

**Candidate # 1**

**Question #1 – Managing Change Skills**

Describe a situation in which you anticipated the future and made changes to current services to meet future needs.


In order to rate candidates on each core skill, the interviewers should use an evaluation sheet, which assigns the candidate a final score for each core skill. Based on the candidate's answers to the interview questions, the interviewers should be able to evaluate how well the candidate demonstrates expertise and proficiency in each core skill area. To make the best decision possible, all interviewers should evaluate the candidates separately and then review the findings as a group.

It is important to have a consistent and reliable evaluation system. An evaluation sheet highlights a candidate's expertise and proficiency in each core skill area, and helps to show which core skills are the candidate's strongest.

The following is an example of an evaluation sheet. In this sample, the candidates are assigned a score on their ability to demonstrate that they have met the core skill requirements of the position.

### 3.6 – Sample Evaluation Sheet

#### EVALUATION SHEET

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Rate each core skill, and any additional skills on a scale from 1 to 4 by circling the rating.

1 = No evidence of desired skill (could not provide any specific examples)

2 = Limited evidence that candidate meets the desired skill (provided incomplete or vague examples)

3 = Evidence that candidate meets the desired skill (provided only one specific and complete example)

4 = Very strong evidence of desired skill (provided several specific and complete examples)

<u>Core skill name:</u>	<u>Rating</u>			
Administration - - - - -	1	2	3	4
Financial Management- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Human Resource Management- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Communication- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Analytical / Problem Solving- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Leadership- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Managing Change- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Goal Oriented- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Optional Desired Skills:				
- Economic Development- - - - -	1	2	3	4
- Project Implementation- - - - -	1	2	3	4
- Recreation Programs / Service Delivery- - - - -	1	2	3	4

### **3.7 - Second Interviews**

The hiring process is more complex for senior positions. For this reason, the council may want to arrange a second or even third interview. A second interview will enable the council to continue to examine the candidate's ability and capability related to core skills, double-check items from the first interview and explore other areas of interest. (for example, the candidate's motivational drive, ability to work with council, etc.)

When candidates make it to the second round of interviews, they should be real contenders for the position. The end of the second round of interviews should give the council enough information to make a final decision; however, a third interview may be necessary.

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## **STEP 4 –CHECKING REFERENCES & MAKING A JOB OFFER**

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### **4.1 - Checking References**

The reference check is the final critical step in making sure the best candidate is hired to the Administrator position. Candidates should be prepared to provide 3 references – at least 2 of these should be people they reported to at their present or previous job. References should be checked partly to verify what you have already discovered, partly to give you peace of mind, and partly to give you a greater understanding of how to get the best out of your chosen candidate once on board.

The Rural Municipal Administrators' Association (RMAA) keeps a list of suspended and expelled members. It is beneficial to contact the RMAA Executive Director regarding candidates, as an additional reference check.

The following are some sample questions that can be asked when checking references. Not all will apply to the candidate you are asking about – your reference questions will have to be tailored to each individual's circumstances.

#### **Sample Reference Questions**

- What is your opinion of (candidate's) skills in terms of their ability to deliver \_\_\_\_\_ within their current position? (Repeat this question to cover all the relevant core skills required for the job.)
- What is your opinion of what motivated (candidate) within their current position?
- What is your opinion of (candidate) as a team player within the organization?
- What would you say was (candidate's) greatest strength?
- What would you say was (candidate's) biggest weakness?
- How would you say (candidate) took direction?
- What management problems, if any, did (candidate) cause you? (If necessary, follow up with – how did you resolve these issues?)
- What parts of the job did (candidate) have the most problems with?

### **Sample Reference Questions (continued)**

- What was (candidate's) attitude toward developing needed new skills?
- How adept was (candidate) at developing new skills?
- How effectively did (candidate) achieve your organization's goals?
- How effective was (candidate) at communicating with the public? With co-workers? With other employees?
- How well did (candidate) deal with the public or handle sensitive issues with the public / media?
- What advice would you give me, as a potential employer of (candidate)?

## **4.2 - Letter of Offer and Terms of Employment**

Once the recruitment process is complete and council has chosen the preferred candidate, making an offer is the final step. This is critical in the recruitment process and has to be properly thought out in advance and clearly communicated. Unsuccessful candidates also need to be informed.

An offer should be presented to the successful candidate in two ways: first verbally (by telephone or in person) and later in writing. After the verbal offer is accepted, a written letter of offer should follow. The letter will generally outline the conditions of employment including start date, starting salary, probationary period, nature and funding of fringe benefits, vacation period, expense policy, moving allowance and information on professional development. The letter of offer should also include a place for the candidate to sign and formally accept the position. A signed copy of the letter of offer returned to the municipality is confirmation of acceptance of the position.

**As the letter of offer will act like an employment contract, it is recommended that your municipal solicitor review it before it is sent to the candidate.**

An alternative to a letter of offer is to appoint an Administrator subject to the terms and conditions of a mutually acceptable contract. Those municipalities that offer employment contracts should include the contract with the letter of offer and advise the candidate that they may accept the contract by signing it and returning the original to the municipal office. An employment contract sets out the terms and conditions of employment, such as the length of the contract, the requirements of the position, the mechanism to adjust salary, the method for terminating the contract, etc.

**Your municipal solicitor should be asked to review / approve the contract.** A properly worded contract can limit any unforeseen consequences in the event of a premature dismissal or disputes about terms and conditions of employment. Both the candidate and the council will have had input into the employment contract and therefore the final document should reflect a common understanding of the commitments made.

For those municipalities that do not offer employment contracts, many have a personnel policy that outlines the specific conditions of employment. In this case, ensure the policy is up-to-date and include it with the letter of offer.



## 4.3 - Sample Letter of Offer

August 7, 2007

Name and Address

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear (Candidate):

**Re: Administrator Position**

I am pleased to confirm that you have been selected for the position of Administrator for the Rural Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_. The position is offered on the following terms and conditions:

Your effective start date will be \_\_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_\_. Your starting salary as the Administrator will be \$xx, xxx per annum.

You will be on probation for you first twelve months (12) of employment with the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_. The Council will meet with you and conduct a performance review after you have completed six (6) months of employment, once again after twelve (12) months, after which time, the probationary period will expire or be extended. The Council will meet with you annually thereafter.

Enclosed is a copy of the personnel policy and information about the municipal benefits plan. Please review each and call <name and contact information> if you have any questions in this regard.

To confirm acceptance of this offer, please sign and return a copy of this letter to the municipality within 5 working days.

I look forward to meeting with you on \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_ at (time) at the municipal office to introduce you to the other staff members and to help familiarize you with your new workplace.

If you have any questions in the meantime, do not hesitate to call me.

Congratulations on your appointment. We are very pleased to have you join our team. Welcome aboard!

Yours truly,

Reeve

Enclosures

I accept the above offer of employment in accordance with the conditions specified above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **4.4 - Sample Letter to Unsuccessful Candidate**

August 7, 2007  
Name and Address

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear (Candidate):

**Re: Administrator Position**

Thank you for your interest in the Administrator position for the Rural Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_.

We very much appreciated speaking with you and discussing your interest in the position.

In considering all the candidates, the Rural Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ was of the opinion that the qualifications of another candidate were more closely suited to the requirements of the position.

Thank you again.

Yours truly,

Reeve