To enhance mission performance, TSA is committed to promoting a culture founded on its values of Integrity, Innovation and Team Spirit.

NOTE: Pursuant to Section 101 of the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (49 U.S.C. 114(n)), this directive establishes Transportation Security Administration (TSA) policy and supersedes Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) orders, policies, guidance, and bulletins regarding interviews and/or other final selection processes issued under the FAA Personnel Management System. This directive is TSA policy and must be applied accordingly.

REVISION: This revised directive supersedes TSA MD 1100.30-26, *Interviews and/or Other Final Selection Processes*, dated February 4, 2010.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES: Section 4, Definitions, added *"reference check"*; Section 6, Policy, added policy guidance on reference checks; Section 7, Procedures, revised and moved to TSA Handbook to MD 1100.30-26, *Interviews and/or Other Final Selection Processes.*

1. **PURPOSE:** This directive provides TSA policy and procedures for the final selection process regarding candidates for TSA positions.

2. **SCOPE:** This directive applies to all TSA employees, applicants, and positions, with the exception of those under a Political Appointment or in the Transportation Security Executive Service (TSES).

3. **AUTHORITIES:** The Aviation and Transportation Security Act, Pub. L.107-71 (ATSA)

4. **DEFINITIONS:**

   A. Assessment Tool: A device or method used to measure the degree to which an applicant possesses the education, experience, competencies and/or knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary for successful job performance. Examples of assessment tools include rating schedules, written tests, work samples, training demonstrations, interviews, paper and pencil or computer-based tests, questionnaires, application reviews, and assessment centers.

   B. Best Qualified (BQ) Candidates: The most highly ranked candidates available for potential selection after recruitment and candidate assessment efforts are completed. BQ candidates are referred to the Selecting Official (SO) on a Certificate(s) of Eligibles. The order in which they are listed on the Certificate may reflect their eligibility for selection (including veterans' preference, if external) and cannot be changed.

   C. Panel Interview: A format for the SO's interview in which the interview is conducted by more than one interviewer interviewing the candidate at the same time. When a panel is used, the interview must be in a structured format.

   D. Reference Check: The communication between the SO or staff member designated by the SO (i.e., reference checker) and an individual (i.e., reference provider) who knows the candidate being considered for potential selection. In most cases, reference providers will be the

candidate's previous employers/supervisors, who have some knowledge of the candidate's past job performance and conduct.

E. <u>Selecting Official (SO)</u>: The TSA employee who has the authority to make a final decision regarding the candidate to be hired for a specific position. In most organizations and for most positions, the SO will be the first-level supervisor of the position being filled; however, some organizations may require that selections be approved by a higher level official.

F. <u>Selecting Official's (SO's) Interview</u>: An interview of the BQ candidates, administered at the discretion of the SO. An SO's interview may be structured or unstructured in format and conducted by the individual SO or by a panel. The results of an SO's interview may be used to guide the SO's final decision among candidates referred for potential selection.

   NOTE: The SO's interview should not be confused with an interview used at an earlier step in the candidate evaluation process to narrow the candidate pool and identify the BQ candidates from among all basically qualified applicants.

G. <u>Selection Recommendation Panel (SRP)</u>: A group tasked by the SO with further evaluating the BQ candidates and making a selection recommendation to the SO. Use of an SRP is optional. If an SRP is convened, the results of the SRP evaluation are provided to the SO for consideration when the SO makes a final selection from the Certificate(s) of Eligibles.

H. <u>Structured Interview</u>: An interview in which all candidates are asked the same questions in the same order and are evaluated on the same rating scale, and interviewers are in agreement on acceptable answers.

I. <u>Unstructured Interview</u>: An interview in which candidates may be asked different questions, a standardized rating scale is not required, and interviewers do not need to agree on acceptable answers.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. TSA managers, supervisors, and local Human Resources (HR) representatives (all references to local HR representatives in this directive includes the Headquarters Business Management Office representatives performing HR functions) are responsible for:

   (1) Adhering to the provisions of this policy in considering and selecting candidates for TSA positions; and

   (2) Seeking guidance and approval from appropriate staff in the Office of Human Capital (OHC) before applying alternative procedures.

B. SOs are responsible for:

   (1) Overseeing and implementing the selection process in accordance with this directive;

   (2) Ensuring that the evaluation/selection criteria and processes are fairly applied and clearly communicated to candidates for the position; and

(3) Ensuring all TSA employees participating in the selection process:

(a) Meet the requirements of Section 6.D. of this directive;

(b) Are provided adequate instructions on their responsibilities; and

(c) Are immediately removed from the process should there be any indication that there is either an actual or potential conflict of interest, or that established procedures are not being followed.

NOTE: In the event there is an actual or potential conflict of interest for the SO, the SO must immediately consult with his/her supervisor and/or the ethics officer and take appropriate action (e.g., recusal, waiver, etc.).

C. Local HR representatives or designated staff members are responsible for:

(1) Maintaining control, confidentiality, and oversight of all records pertaining to the candidate assessment and selection process, to include the Certificate(s) of Eligibles, assessment tools, evaluation criteria and results, and other related documentation;

(2) Serving as a member and/or facilitator for panel interviews and SRPs, and immediately notifying the SO of concerns, if any, regarding participant conduct or the evaluation/selection criteria or processes being used; and

(3) When necessary, coordinating with OHC for assistance.

D. OHC is responsible for:

(1) Developing, approving, and issuing all TSA assessment tools, including development of specific structured interviews that must be used when conducting SO's interviews for certain types of positions; and

(2) Providing guidance and advice to TSA management officials on the development and use of all assessment tools and selection processes used in filling a position.

6. **POLICY:**

A. Any TSA employee involved in the selection process (e.g., SO's interviews, SRPs, reference checks, etc.) must adhere to all applicable laws and regulations, in addition to TSA policies and procedures, that are designed to ensure that all candidates are treated fairly and are provided equal opportunity. Such employment laws require that all aspects of the selection process focus on job-related competencies and requirements, are free from bias, and decisions are made based on legitimate business reasons.

B. All assessment tools and selection processes (e.g., SO's interviews, SRPs, reference checks, etc.) applied in filling TSA positions will be utilized in accordance with this directive and all other policies, procedures, and guidance issued by the Assistant Administrator for Human Capital (AA/OHC), including any position-specific candidate assessment and selection

guidance (e.g., *Local Hiring Manual*). TSA officials are prohibited from using any assessment tool that was not issued or reviewed, and authorized for use as specified, by appropriate staff in OHC.

C. The provisions of this directive are applicable provided <u>the SO has the discretion to further assess</u>, and select, from among the BQ candidates, the candidate to be hired for a specific position.

NOTE: For certain positions, the requirements of the candidate assessment and selection procedure may be such that the SO will not have the discretion to further assess the BQ candidates after they are referred to the SO for final selection.

D. SOs must ensure that anyone participating in the final selection process:

(1) Holds a permanent DHS position;

(2) Is sufficiently qualified to serve as a subject matter expert in the evaluation of candidates for the position to be filled (this means that in most cases he/she will either be at or above the pay band level of the position or have extensive experience and training in HR functions);

(3) Is not a current applicant, or (as far as can be determined) a potential future applicant, for the vacancy being filled;

(4) Is not related by blood or marriage, or connected by close personal relationship, to any of the applicants for the position; and

(5) If conducting SO's interviews, is familiar with the duties, responsibilities, and competencies of the position to be filled, and have experience conducting interviews and/or have completed a training course on interviewing (through the Online Learning Center or live training) within the past year.

NOTE: Interviewers conducting OHC-developed SO's interviews must follow the requirements for OHC-developed interviews. See the *Administration Guide for OHC-Developed Interviews*, available on <u>HCInsight</u>.

E. SO's Interviews

(1) The SO's interview is a discretionary interview that may only be utilized after the SO receives the Certificate(s) of Eligibles for final selection. Therefore, SOs may decide to conduct an SO's interview of some, none, or all of the candidates referred for potential selection for a position. The option to interview only some of the referred candidates may be useful in particular circumstances; for example, when the SO is familiar with some but not all of the referred candidates, or when only some of the candidates whose names appear on the Certificate of Eligibles are potentially within reach for selection due to veterans' preference requirements.

(2) If OHC has developed an SO's interview to be used in making selections for positions of a specific type, that interview must be used <u>without modification</u>, if the SO decides to utilize an SO's interview to fill such position. The Organizational Assessment Services Division (OAS)/OHC can provide information and guidance on OHC- developed SO's interviews.

(3) In the absence of an OHC-developed SO's interview, the SO may choose to develop an SO's interview. A structured format is recommended. SOs should refer to the *Structured Interview Question Bank*, available on HCInsight and/or the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) publication *Structured Interviews: A Practical Guide* for guidance in developing an SO's interview when an OHC-developed SO's interview has not been established for a specific type of position.

   NOTE: Locally-developed SO's interviews must be reviewed and approved by OAS/OHC prior to use; however interviews developed using the *Structured Interview Question Bank*, <u>without modification</u>, do not require OAS/OHC review prior to use.

(4) Use of a panel interview to conduct SO's interviews is recommended when the SO believes that having more than one interviewer would be valuable. When a panel is used, the interview must be in a structured format.

(5) When competitive procedures are being used and the position being filled is a Special Agent in Charge, Federal Security Director, TSA Representative, or an L or M pay band position, an interview panel must be held. Appropriate interview panel membership will be verified as part of the Executive Resources Council submission process.

(6) When the position being filled is managerial, and at the K pay band level or above, the panel format must be used if the SO elects to utilize an SO's interview before making a selection.

(7) SO's interviews will be conducted in person whenever possible; however, other means (e.g., telephonic, live video connection, etc.) may be used if necessary, provided that appropriate and sufficient controls are in place to verify the identity of the person being interviewed.

(8) Reasonable efforts should be made to facilitate interviews of candidates who are unavailable to be interviewed in person, such as those candidates living or traveling outside the area, applicants who are away serving on military duty, or those unable to travel due to physical limitations. In such cases, the SO should consider alternatives (within prudent funding and time constraints) such as using other interview locations, or telephone or video conferencing capabilities. If applicable, a candidate may request a reasonable accommodation for a disability (see [TSA MD 1100.73-4, *Reasonable Accommodation Program*](TSA MD 1100.73-4)).

   NOTE: A candidate who, despite consideration of alternative options, cannot be reached for or cannot participate in an SO's interview due to absence for active military duty, will continue to be considered for the position as if he/she performed successfully in the interview.

F. The SO may, at his/her discretion, elect to utilize an SRP (see Section E. of TSA Handbook to MD 1100.30-26, *Interviews and/or Other Final Selection Processes* for the requirements for convening an SRP). SRPs can assist the SO by further evaluating, and making a selection recommendation from the BQ candidates for a vacancy. The SRP process may or may not include an SO's interview. If an SRP is convened, the results of the selection panel evaluation will be provided to the SO for consideration when making a final selection from the Certificate(s) of Eligibles.

G. Reference Checks

(1) The SO may, at his/her discretion, elect to conduct reference checks on some, none, or all of the BQ candidates referred for potential selection for a position.

(2) Reference checks will be conducted after all other assessments and selection processes have narrowed the candidate pool to a select few and before the SO's final selection decision.

(3) Reference checks must focus only on a candidate's past job-related skills, accomplishments, and behaviors that are substantiated by reference providers' experience working with, or directly observing, the candidate.

(4) The intent and objectives of reference checks are to:

(a) Verify the facts and reports of experience, training, or accomplishments claimed by a candidate;

(b) Assess how closely a candidate's past experience and workplace behavior match the requirements of the job; and

(c) Seek additional knowledge and different perspectives about a candidate's job-related skills, accomplishments, and behaviors.

H. The results of all assessment tools and selection processes must be used in the context of the applicable TSA internal or external competitive selection policy and process. For example, if a veterans' preference eligible candidate on a list of external competitive candidates does not perform as well in an SO's interview as candidates without veterans' preference, this result alone does not authorize the SO to select the non-preference eligible candidate. The SOs should consult with their local HR representatives for guidance on applying the results of candidate assessment tools and selection processes.

I. Only the SO has the authority to make the final selection of a candidate for a position.

J. All records pertaining to the candidate assessment and selection process (e.g., applications/resumes, candidate scores, SO's interviews, SRP evaluations, reference checks, etc.) should be maintained, secured, and controlled in accordance with all applicable TSA records management requirements.

7. **PROCEDURES:** See TSA Handbook to TSA MD 1100.30-26, *Interviews and/or Other Final Selection Processes*.

8. **APPROVAL AND EFFECTIVE DATE:** This policy is approved and effective the date of signature unless otherwise specified.

APPROVAL

Signed   *3/21/11*
_____   _____
Sean J. Byrne   Date
Assistant Administrator for Human Capital

EFFECTIVE

_____
Date

Distribution: Assistant Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Assistant Administrators,
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