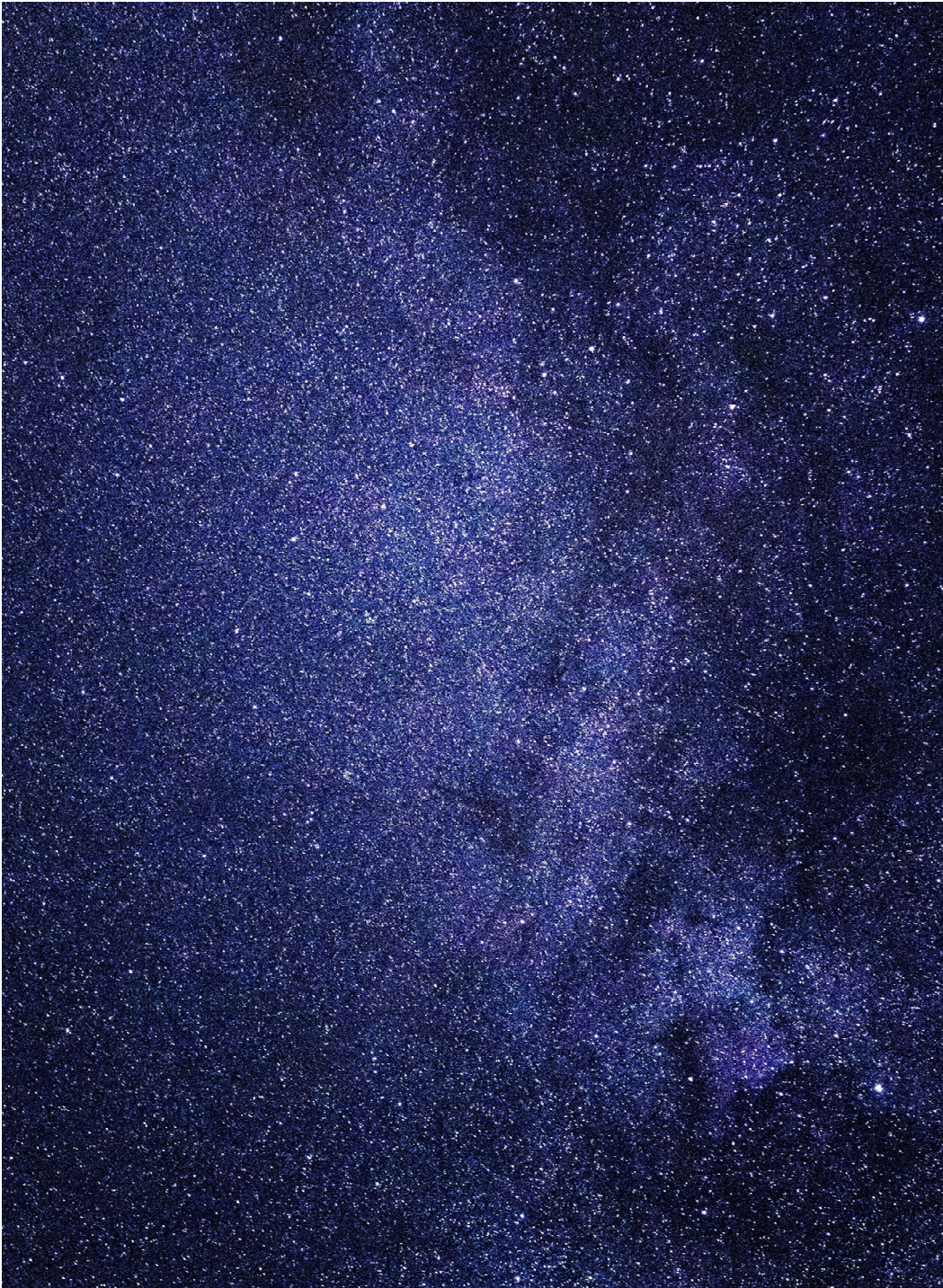# Talent Exploration

General Interview Guide

The Recruiting team created this general interview guide as a resource to support you with the identification and selection of your newest team member. We know that proper candidate selection is essential to meeting hiring needs as well as your team's overall success. This step-by-step guide will provide guidance in determining your team's core values and introduce you to interviewing best practices to ensure that you select the candidate that is best suited for the job and your team.

You may want to know…

What is behavioral interviewing?
Behavioral interviewing is a technique based on the idea that you can best predict how well someone will perform in a future situation by examining their past behaviors in a similar situation.

What is situational interviewing?
Situational interviewing provides a candidate with a hypothetical situation. The candidate discusses what they would do in the situation and what they think the result would be. This is a helpful way to ask a question if the candidate does not have any examples of past behavior.

What are probing questions?
Probing questions, or follow-up questions, give an interviewer the opportunity to further inquire about a value or competency. For example, if a candidate says, "Our team created a monthly newsletter", that's not enough information. You may want to ask a follow up question such as, "What was *your* role in creating the newsletter?" This will give you more information about the role the candidate played in creating the newsletter.

Who should be on the interview team?
This depends on the type of position. If the candidate would potentially be working closely with a team, it may be helpful to have some members of that team interview the candidate.

Consistency in interviewing is key. The same team members should interview each candidate so that the candidates' skills and qualities can be evaluated and compared equally. We recommend that at least two people interview a candidate and that the people in the interviews have familiarity with the basic duties of the job.

What is "cultural fit"?
Cultural fit means that the candidate's behaviors are in alignment with their current team's core values.

Prepare for the Interview

Identify Your Team's Core Values

Before you begin the interview process, meet with your team to identify three core values that all members of your team should have regardless of status or years on the job. Most likely, someone without these qualities would not succeed in your team.

Identifying your team's core values is important because they help to create alignment within your team. While you are interviewing, listen closely for these core values.

Examples of Core Values:

Daring – Taking calculated risks

Innovative – Bringing new ideas to life

Inquisitive – Eager to learn more

Empathetic – Tuned in to the feelings of others

Passionate – Focused and excited about our field

Accessible – Visible on campus and welcoming

Flexible – Able to transition quickly to new priorities

Diligent – Careful and persistent work

Tenacious - Persistent and driven

Meticulous – Focused on detailed work

Integrity – Honest and with strong moral principles

Collaborative within our team

Collaborative throughout Caltech

Autonomous – Acting independently

Service oriented – Providing top-level service to others

Goal oriented – Focused on a specific objective

Analytic Ability – Able to collect, gather and analyze information

Encouraging a diversity of perspectives

Methodical – Systematic, careful in planning and completing projects

Our team is:

Create Interview Questions

A behavioral competency is a trait, skill, or attitude that would make a candidate successful in a certain role. Which behaviors or soft skills will make someone successful in this role? Identify **the top three behavioral competencies** for this position and choose a related question or questions to ask during the interview.

Examples of Behavioral Competencies:

Problem Solving – an ability to proactively foresee problems and find solutions.
- Tell me about a time you encountered a problem at work. What steps did you take to solve the problem? Would you solve the same problem differently if you had to do it again?

- Give me an example of a time you when you had very little information about a project or task but had to act decisively. How did you respond?

Customer Service – a helpful attitude, eager to assist others, not easily inconvenienced.
- Give me an example of a time when you had an upset customer. How did you handle it? What was the outcome or follow up?

- Tell me about some customer focused actions or tweaks you have implemented, for your group or personally, that have led to positive results with customers.

Personal Accountability – takes ownership over projects where appropriate, follows up to ensure a project or task is completed.
- Give me an example of a lesson you have learned from making a mistake. What did you do differently going forward?

- Tell me about a time when you felt that it was important to take ownership for a problem or issue. What did you learn?

Continuous Improvement – seeks out opportunities to improve as an employee, develop in their position, and pursue education related to their role.
- Tell me about a process you have designed or redesigned to improve productivity or efficiency. What was the impact?

- Give an example of when you questioned, "the way things have always been done" to ensure that a process continued to be relevant and add value. What was your approach?

Sensitivity to Urgency – an ability to discern between an urgent request and a non-urgent request and to take the appropriate action.

- o Tell me about a time when you had several urgent tasks to complete. How did you prioritize these tasks? How did you communicate to others, if they were involved?

- o What is urgent for some people is not urgent for others. Can you provide an example of a time when you had to either communicate urgency to others or manage their expectations?

Flexibility and Adaptability – feels comfortable with ambiguity, changing environments and circumstances.

- o Discuss a time when priorities changed last minute or when you were assigned additional work outside of your normal projects. What was your response?

- o Tell me about a time when there was a big change in your workplace (moved offices, new supervisor, new reporting structure). How did this effect you?

Persuasive Communication – skilled at communicating in a confident, collegial manner, both in writing and verbally.

- o Talk about a time when you had to make a point or communicate an idea that you thought your colleagues or clients might be resistant to. What was your approach?

- o Tell me about a successful presentation you gave and why you think it went well.

Teamwork – an inclination to include others, work with others and build professional relationships

- o Tell me about a time when you built rapport with others in the workplace. What was your approach?

- o Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or help others to compromise. What steps did you take? What was the result?

- o Can you give me an example of being in a team that thrived or perhaps didn't work well? What element was missing? What would you do differently in the future?

Attention to Detail – an ability to notice small details, discrepancies and errors and prevent or correct them.

- o Can you tell me about a time when you noticed an error or inconsistency in a project you were working on? At what point did you notice it and what was the result of your efforts?

- o What steps have you taken in the past to ensure that you do not miss small errors or inconsistencies? What were the results of those steps?

Leadership – **An ability to direct a project, set goals, assign tasks and motivate others.**

- o Tell me about a coworker or colleague that you helped develop. What were the results?

- o Tell me about a time when you took on a leadership role without the actual title. How did you navigate that role and what was the outcome?

- o Describe a situation where you needed to persuade your team to follow your idea. What were your methods and what was the outcome?

Remember to:

- o Start the interview promptly
- o Listen 90%, Talk 10%
- o Do not lead the candidate to an answer you want to hear
- o Be aware of your time
- o Engage the candidate (make eye contact, nod, etc.)
- o Ask probing questions when you need more information

Important!

Federal legislation mandates that organizations practice nondiscriminatory actions during the hiring process. This means that, by law, you are not allowed to make hiring decisions based on anything other than bona fide occupational qualifications. In other words you cannot discriminate based on:

- o Age
- o Sexual orientation
- o Ethnic origin
- o Religious preference of affiliation
- o Marital status
- o Disabilities

Any questions related to the above must be avoided. Questions that, although not specifically listed here, elicit information on **race, color, ancestry age, sex, religion, disability, or arrest and court record** are prohibited

If the candidate asks about salary, you may provide the compensation department's suggested salary range for the position. You may ask what the candidate's salary requirements are **but you are prohibited by law from asking about current or past salaries.**

Some General opening questions

- o How did you hear about this position at Caltech?
- o What made you interested in applying?
- o What are your favorite aspects of your current/past positions?
- o Which aspects of your current/past positions are/were frustrating?
- o What personal qualities would you say have contributed to successes in your career?
- o What are you looking for in your next opportunity?

Interview Step	Timing (45 – 60 mins total)	Actions to Take
Introduction	5 minutes	- Begin promptly - Ask if the candidate needs water - Introduce yourself and your team - Describe Interview Format
Questions	5 minutes	Begin with a few general opening questions
	15 minutes	Ask behavioral competency questions
	15 minutes	Ask technical competency questions
Candidate Questions	5 -10 minutes	- Be prepared to answer questions regarding your personal experience working at Caltech - Be humble when answering questions - Give honest answers, and give the candidate a sense of the role/team
Thank the Candidate	A few minutes	- Highlight the reasons you like working at Caltech - Thank the candidate for their time - Discuss next steps in the interview process