

TOWN OF SMITHFIELD, RHODE ISLAND

TOWN MANAGER SELECTION

PLANNING, RESEARCH AND SUGGESTIONS

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Recruiting and Hiring a Town Manager

Initial Thoughts

The International City/Country Management Association (ICMA) provides a wealth of information to guide the recruitment process for city and town governments. Several points in this document have been referenced from this organization. Well managed processes that lead to an objective and well-supported decision require the implementation of a defined process. The ICMA defines three important points to form the process:

- **Task Force Formation:** A diverse group of ICMA members, including city managers and executive search firms, updated the recruitment guidelines.
- **Recruitment Process:** Emphasizes careful planning, candidate evaluation, and understanding the relationship between the governing body and the chief administrator.
- **ICMA Code of Ethics:** Highlights the importance of ethics and the Voluntary Credentialed Manager program in the recruitment process.

Process Overview

The Town should consider these key points to implement an appropriate process⁵:

- **Candidate Status Notification:** Promptly acknowledge resumes and notify applicants of their status throughout the recruitment process to maintain a positive impression and ensure confidentiality.
- **Maintaining Confidentiality:** Confidentiality is crucial to protect applicants' current job security and career opportunities. The extent of confidentiality should be determined at the outset and communicated to applicants.
- **Role of the Media:** Media involvement should be managed carefully, with clear communication about the recruitment process and confidentiality of résumés.
- **Selection Process:** The process includes reviewing applications, determining candidates for interviews, conducting interviews, and making the final selection. Initial background checks and reference checks are essential steps.
- **Personal Relationships:** Members must disclose any conflicts of interest or personal financial gains due to relationships with individuals or entities.
- **Confidential Information:** Members should not use confidential information for personal gain or disclose it unless it is public knowledge.
- **Private Employment:** Members should avoid private employment that conflicts with their official duties.
- **Endorsements:** Members should not endorse commercial products or services unless it is for professional references or certain non-compensated endorsements.

Process Details

The document, Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting A Local Government Administrator published by the ICMA (page vii), outlines a series of high-level tasks associated with this process. A summary of the outline follows:

1. Managing the organization during recruitment
2. Initiating the recruitment
3. Conducting the recruitment
4. Key elements of a recruitment framework
5. Key elements of the application process
6. The role of the media in the recruitment process
7. The selection process
8. The negotiation process
9. The transition process

The Town Council has already completed task #1 of this outline by approving an Interim Town Manager (Chief Seltzer) as well as tasks #2 – 3. The fourth task has been initiated recently. The first step in this task is to approve and implement the structure of the process: 1) Conduct an in-house recruitment, 2) Retain an outside company to conduct the recruitment, 3) Use a hybrid approach and conduct the recruitment in conjunction with the outside company.

The Town has already advertised the position and indicated that applications have been received. To maintain the confidentiality and objectivity of this process, these applications (if any) should not be distributed outside of the Human Resources department. In addition, the identities of these individuals should also remain confidentially, both internally and externally.

Pre-Review Planning Suggestions

It would be great to extract some qualitative information from the Council members about their thoughts for transiting to the next Town Manager. These thoughts and insights would be useful for the Committee for several tasks:

Questionnaire for Town Council Members

It would be great to extract some qualitative information from the Council members about their thoughts for transiting to the next Town Manager. These thoughts and insights would be useful for the Committee for several tasks:

- Integrate these thoughts into an evaluation rubric,
- Approval of the rubric by the Committee,
- Distribution of the rubric to the Council after approval, and
- Use of a thorough and detailed rubric during the evaluation process.

The following statements will provide some insight to gain information from the Town Council. Each statement is intended to provide several phrases or sentences to provide details to the question.

1. Define three most important attributes of managing the Town,
2. List and define three current challenges of managing the municipal operations,
3. Describe three attributes that are believed to additional attention and leadership from the future Town Manager,
4. Provide two characteristics that are unique to the Town of Smithfield, and

5. Define one sentence that would define the operating style and leadership of an effective Town Manager.

Evaluation Rubric Research

To ensure an objective, clear and consistent process for the evaluation and hiring of a management position, it is important to consider the following thoughts.

- **Define the Purpose:** Clearly outline the goals of the evaluation. [This includes assessing the candidate's ability to meet the municipality's strategic goals, manage fiscal and staff resources, and maintain public relations¹.](#)
- **Identify Key Competencies:** Determine the essential skills and attributes required for the role. [Common competencies include leadership, communication, strategic planning, financial management, and community engagement².](#)
- **Develop Evaluation Criteria:** Create specific, measurable criteria for each competency. [For example, under leadership, you might evaluate the candidate's ability to inspire and motivate staff, make strategic decisions, and handle crises effectively³.](#)
- **Use a Rating Scale:** Implement a consistent rating scale (e.g., 1-5) to assess each criterion. [This helps ensure objectivity and allows for easy comparison between candidates³.](#)
- **Include Multiple Perspectives:** Gather input from various stakeholders, such as council members, department heads, and community representatives. [This provides a well-rounded view of the candidate's suitability¹.](#)
- **Provide Clear Instructions:** Ensure that evaluators understand how to use the rubric and what each rating level represents. [This helps maintain consistency and fairness in the evaluation process².](#)
- **Review and Revise:** Regularly review and update the rubric to reflect any changes in the municipality's goals or the role's requirements. [This ensures that the evaluation process remains relevant and effective¹.](#)

By following these steps, you can create a comprehensive and effective evaluation rubric for hiring a municipal town manager. If you need more detailed guidance, you might find the resources from the [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\) helpful³](#).

Evaluation Process

Rubric Research

There are many examples of evaluation rubrics for the evaluation, interviewing and hiring process. Here are two examples from credible resources that will provide some foundation to the rubric compilation process:

- The [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\) provides a comprehensive evaluation form that includes various performance categories and criteria³.](#)
- The [Florida City and County Management Association \(FCCMA\) offers a detailed guide on best practices for evaluating a city manager¹.](#)

Evaluation Characteristics

Evaluating applications for a municipal town manager position involves assessing various competencies and skills. Here are some sample rubrics and criteria that can be used:

1. Individual Characteristics

- **Diligence and Thoroughness:** Evaluates the applicant's ability to be diligent and thorough in their duties.
- **Judgment:** Assesses the applicant's ability to exercise good judgment.
- **Enthusiasm and Adaptability:** Measures the applicant's enthusiasm, cooperation, and willingness to adapt.
- **Stamina:** Evaluates the applicant's mental and physical stamina appropriate for the position.
- **Composure and Attitude:** Assesses the applicant's composure, appearance, and attitude appropriate for an executive position.

2. Professional Skills and Status

- **Knowledge of Local Government Management:** Evaluates the applicant's knowledge of current developments affecting local government management.
- **Innovation and Creativity:** Measures the applicant's capacity for innovation and creativity.
- **Problem Analysis and Solution Development:** Assesses the applicant's ability to anticipate and analyze problems to develop effective solutions.
- **Openness to New Ideas:** Evaluates the applicant's willingness to try new ideas proposed by governing body members and/or staff.
- **Professional Example:** Measures the applicant's ability to handle public office affairs in a fair and impartial manner.

3. Performance Goals and Objectives

- **Strategic Vision Alignment:** Assesses the applicant's ability to align performance goals, objectives, and targets with the elected body's established strategic plans and goals.
- **Operational Effectiveness:** Evaluates the applicant's effectiveness in operational management, including fiscal and staff management.
- **Public Relations and Advocacy:** Measures the applicant's ability to manage public relations and advocate for the municipality.

4. Communication and Relationship Building

- **Communication Skills:** Assesses the applicant's ability to communicate effectively with council members, staff, and the public.
- **Relationship Building:** Evaluates the applicant's ability to build and maintain positive relationships with stakeholders.

Sources

Reference	Title and URL
1	Evaluating the City Manager Best Management Practices https://fccma.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Evaluating-the-City-Manager.pdf
2	Manager Evaluations Handbook https://www.ilcma.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ICMA-Manager-Evaluations-Handbook-final.pdf
3	City Manager Performance Evaluation https://icma.org/sites/default/files/301268_City%20Manager%20Performance%20Evaluation.pdf
4	Best Practices in Hiring a Town Manager Best Practices in Hiring a Town Manager - Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA)
5	Recruitment Guidelines for Selecting a Local Government Administrator Recruitment Guidelines Handbook Update.pdf