

Guidelines for complying with the legal requirement to hire from the “most qualified pool” of applicants.

The North Carolina Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) is providing this update to agency human resources and hiring personnel as a one page quick-reference regarding application processing and candidate selection resulting from the restored requirement to hire from the pool of most qualified applicants.

Effective July, 1st, 2017, all State departments, agencies and institutions shall select from the pool of most qualified persons for positions subject to the State Human Resources Act. Selection shall be based upon job-related qualifications of applicants for employment using fair and valid selection criteria.

Applications should be screened, initially, to determine which ones are qualified. From those qualified applications, the most qualified pool is the subset of applications determined to have the more relevant, job related, higher level of program knowledge, skills, or combination of education and experience compared to others deemed qualified.

The potential hiring pool referred to hiring managers shall be those most qualified applications determined to have a relatively greater or more specialized degree of directly related job qualifications than other qualified applications.

- Employees responsible for evaluating applications should determine, based on the content of each application, if the application shows the candidate to be not qualified, qualified or among the most qualified.
- If, as of July, 2017, all minimally qualified applications are already referred, hiring managers may proceed with interviewing and candidate selection activities that comply with hiring from among the pool of most qualified applicants among all qualified applicants referred to them.
- As of July, 2017, for new postings and all postings associated with exam recruiting plans where application screening has not progressed beyond the determination of not qualified and qualified, application reviewers should add an application screening step to further sort qualified candidates to achieve a pool of relatively most qualified candidates.

Though some specialized situations require additional steps, the standard progression includes these steps:

1. **Application received** - this step is intended as a catchment area for applications to wait until moved by a reviewer to step 2 for screening.
2. **Screening for minimum qualifications** - this step is where qualified/not qualified determinations are made. Archive duplicate applications and, once screened for minimum qualifications, leave “not qualified” applications in step 2, as they are no longer under consideration. Move “qualified” applications to step 3 for further sortation. *To be considered minimally qualified, an application must possess both the required minimum education and experience and the posting’s knowledge, skill and ability requirements.*
3. **Screening of qualified applications to determine most qualified applicant pool** – this step is where “most qualified pool” determinations are made. *The “most qualified pool” is the subset of qualified applications showing the more relevant, job related, higher level of program knowledge, skills, or combination of education and experience compared to others deemed qualified.* Leave less relatively qualified applications in step 3; move most relatively qualified applications (the “most qualified pool”) to the eligible list.
4. **Refer “most qualified pool” of applications to hiring manager.**