

# Reference Checking 101: 3 Easy Steps

Reference checking is a vital part of a successful hiring strategy and is primarily used to:

- Verify information provided by the candidate
- Better predict the candidate's on-the-job success
- Gain additional knowledge (e.g., candidate's abilities)

Reference checks should be conducted once the applicant pool is narrowed down to the top candidate(s).

## Three Easy Steps:

### STEP 1

- Decide who will conduct the reference check (e.g., hiring official or HR specialist)
- Develop questions for references (see sample questions)

### STEP 2

- Inform candidates you will be checking their references and request permission, if not already obtained (e.g., **OF-306**)
- Contact references
  - Briefly describe the position and the duties the candidate will perform
  - Ask each reference the same questions
  - Verify job-specific information, as appropriate
- Contact additional references, as applicable
- Clarify with the candidate any conflicting information received by references

### STEP 3

- Ensure materials are stored and retained according to agency policy



#### Did you know?

A “reference” is a person (e.g., supervisor, coworker, professor) whom the hiring manager or human resources (HR) specialist can talk with about the candidate's past performance.

Reference checking can provide a different perspective. So... what should you ask during a reference check?

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- ☑ In what capacity did you work with the candidate (e.g., peer, colleague, supervisor)?
- ☑ Could you give me a brief description of the duties the candidate performed?
- ☑ What were the candidate's strengths? What were the candidate's weaknesses or areas where the candidate could improve?
- ☑ Would you recommend him/her for this position? Why or why not?
- ☑ How well did the candidate know the work? How well did the candidate perform on the job? How well did the candidate manage the workload?
- ☑ How would you describe the candidate's relationships with co-workers, subordinates, and supervisors?
- ☑ Is there anything else you can tell me about the candidate's ability to perform his/her job?
- ☑ What kind of work-related training, certificates, education, or other qualifications does the candidate have?
- ☑ Is the candidate eligible for re-hire in your organization?