

# A Guide to Hiring Your Chief Administrative Officer



***Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade***

***Municipal Finance and Advisory Services***

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# **A Guide to Hiring Your Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)**

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## **□ INTRODUCTION – HIRING YOUR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

- Taking Stock
  - Considerations when Hiring Your CAO
  - Embarking on a Recruitment Process
- 

## **□ STEP 1 – DETERMINING THE RESPONSIBILITIES & REQUIREMENTS OF A CAO**

- 1.1 - Developing a CAO Position Description
  - 1.2 - Sample CAO Position Descriptions
  - 1.3 - Core Skills
- 

## **□ STEP 2 – RECRUITING FOR THE POSITION**

- 2.1 - Targeting Potential Candidates
  - 2.2 - Developing a CAO Advertisement
  - 2.3 - Sample Advertisements
  - 2.4 - Advertising Options
- 

## **□ STEP 3 - SCREENING APPLICANTS & CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS**

- 3.1 - Screening Applicants
  - 3.2 - Developing Interview Questions
  - 3.3 - Sample Interview Questions
  - 3.4 - Structuring the Interview
  - 3.5 - Evaluating the Interview
  - 3.6 - Sample Evaluation Sheet
  - 3.7 - Second Interviews
  - 3.8 - Further Evaluating the Candidate
- 

## **□ STEP 4 - CHECKING REFERENCES & MAKING A JOB OFFER**

- 4.1 - Checking References
- 4.2 - Letter of Offer and Terms of Employment
- 4.3 - Sample Letter of Offer
- 4.4 - Sample Letter to Unsuccessful Candidate

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## INTRODUCTION – HIRING YOUR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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All municipalities, at one time or another, will be faced with the resignation or retirement of their Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). Given the key role the CAO has in the municipality, the process of replacing an experienced CAO – someone who has become extremely knowledgeable about your municipality over the years – can be daunting.

*Replacing your CAO is a challenge, but the right person can help move your community into the future.*

Councils should approach this challenge positively. Highly qualified people with the core skills required for a CAO do exist and can be found from many walks of life – all the municipality has to do is find that one right person. *A Guide to Hiring Your Chief Administrative Officer* offers practical advice on the process for hiring a new CAO.

### **Taking Stock**

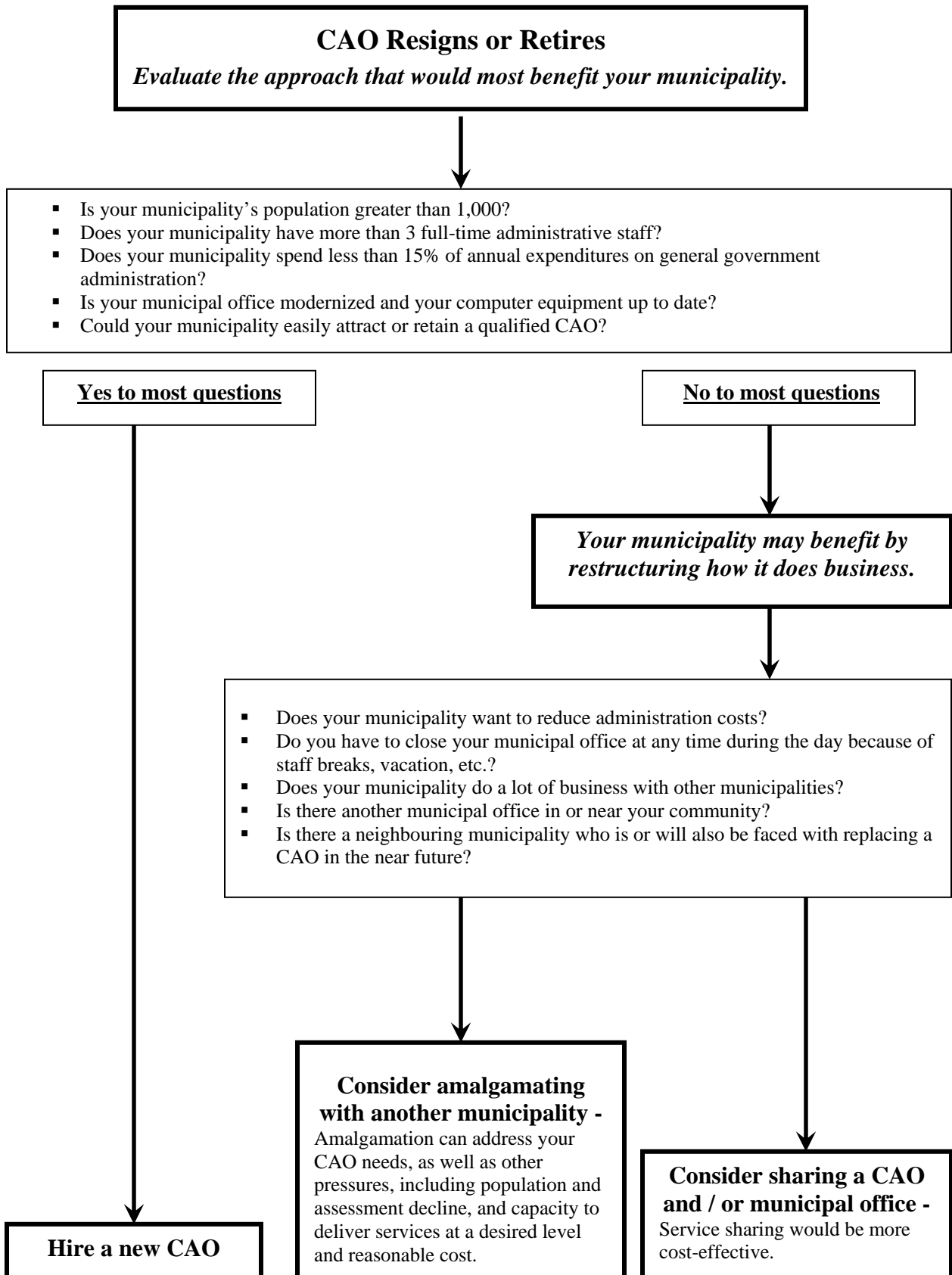
The resignation or retirement of your CAO presents a good opportunity to take stock of your municipality. Before embarking on the process of hiring a new CAO, councils need to step back and gauge the municipality's strengths and understand its challenges. Where does council want the municipality to be in five or ten years, and what is council's vision? How can the municipality be positioned for the future? What type of skills would a new CAO need to move the municipality forward? If council has not already done so, completing the Municipal Health Checklist in the Association of Manitoba Municipalities' Tools for Change program is a good first step.

*For some municipalities, taking stock may require you to focus on new approaches for long-term sustainability.*

Council may determine, based on the results of the Municipal Health Checklist, that it wants to explore options for restructuring. Restructuring can help municipalities capture future opportunities and ensure the long-term health of their municipality. Restructuring can take many forms, including changing the way services are delivered (for example sharing a CAO with another municipality) or even merging with another municipality.

The chart (Considerations when Hiring Your CAO) on the following page lays out critical questions council should be asking as it takes stock of the municipality and determines its next steps.

## Considerations when Hiring Your CAO



## **Embarking on a Recruitment Process**

Council's decision to hire a new CAO means development and implementation of a recruitment process to ensure that the best person possible for your municipality is hired to the position. The best person will have the qualifications council is looking for, but more importantly, will possess the necessary skills to take the municipality in the direction council has chosen for the future.

*A Guide to Hiring Your Chief Administrative Officer* outlines the critical steps that are necessary in the recruitment process. While municipalities will want to develop a recruitment process that is tailored for their particular circumstances, each of these critical steps should be undertaken:

**Step 1 – Determining the Responsibilities and Requirements of a CAO –**

Developing a position description that clearly defines the duties and responsibilities, together with the results the CAO will be expected to deliver, is the critical first step.

**Step 2 – Recruiting for the Position –**

Targeting potential candidates, developing an effective CAO job advertisement and evaluating options for advertising are keys to successful recruitment.

**Step 3 – Screening Applicants and Conducting Interviews –**

The screening and interview processes are critical steps in choosing the right person for the CAO job. This is the municipality's opportunity to evaluate whether prospective candidates possess the core and any additional skills required for the job.

**Step 4 – Checking References and Making a Job Offer –**

The reference check is the final critical step in the hiring process before making a job offer.

**Remember – a strong and successful municipality relies on its CAO. A well-developed recruitment process ensures you hire a person who possesses the core skills your municipality needs now and into the future.**

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# STEP 1 – DETERMINING THE RESPONSIBILITIES & REQUIREMENTS OF A CAO

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## **1.1 - Developing a CAO Position Description**

Developing a position description that clearly defines the duties and responsibilities of the CAO is the first step in a successful recruitment process. An effective job description clearly defines the responsibilities of the job, as well as the results the CAO will be expected to deliver, and should be relevant over time.

*All CAOs are responsible for administration, financial management, and human resource management.*

### **Core CAO Duties and Responsibilities:**

The CAO has specific duties and responsibilities, which are outlined in *The Municipal Act*. The CAO will either directly perform these, or will delegate them to another staff member, depending on the municipality's size. Regardless of how these duties and responsibilities are carried out, the CAO always remains responsible under the Act. Core duties and responsibilities include administration, financial management and human resource management.

### **Administration:**

The CAO is the administrative head of the municipality and is responsible for the overall administration of the municipality including:

- **Meetings of Council** – preparing and organizing all meeting and public hearing agendas; recording the minutes of all municipal regular meetings, special meetings and public hearings; and providing council with sound advice on all aspects of municipal governance and legislative requirements.
- **By-laws** – ensuring all required by-laws and resolutions are in-place and up-to-date; preparing resolutions and by-laws for the municipality, including the by-laws that require Ministerial or Public Utility Board approval (i.e. borrowing by-laws, local improvement and special service levy by-laws; public utility rate by-laws); ensuring the municipality's procedural and organizational by-laws are in place and up-to-date.

- **Implementing council priorities** – ensuring the policies, programs and services of the municipality are implemented; monitoring, evaluating and reporting back to council on the policies, programs and services of the municipality; and answering all public requests, inquiries and / or complaints, and ensuring a high standard of customer service.

### **Financial Management:**

Sound financial management is critical to the successful operation of the municipality.

The duties of the CAO in this regard are far reaching, including:

- **Preparing the annual financial plan** – presenting options for the annual financial plan for council’s consideration, including the general operating budget, the capital budget, and the five-year capital expenditure plan.
- **Monitoring the financial plan** – preparing the monthly financial statements, an annual financial statement and cash flow projections as required.
- **Controlling** – the day-to-day accounting i.e. the accounts payable, accounts receivable, tax collections, payroll, monthly bank reconciliations and investments. This also includes ensuring that accurate records and books are kept of all of the financial affairs of the municipality, and making adjustments, as required, to the municipality’s financial plan.
- **Reporting** – providing council with up-to-date financial information on a regular and timely basis, ensuring that exceptions and issues are clearly identified, providing the Province with financial information and reports as required by legislation / agreements, working with the auditors when they are conducting the annual financial audit of the municipality and providing financial information to the public as required.
- **Taxation process** – administering the entire taxation process, including the annual Board of Revision hearing, collection of taxes and management of overdue accounts, and the sale of properties in arrears of taxes through the tax sale process.

### **Human Resource Management:**

The CAO is responsible for the management and supervision of the employees of the municipality. Specific duties include:

- **Recruitment and development of employees** – including hiring, training, evaluating, promoting and dismissing employees.
- **Conducting union negotiations.**
- **Developing a human resource recruitment / retention plan.**



## **Additional CAO Duties:**

The additional duties of the CAO will depend on the particular needs of your municipality based on its size, structure, vision and long-term plans. The CAO may have additional duties relating to:

- **Delivery of recreation programs and services.**
- **Economic Development.**
- **Project Implementation,** for example the implementation of a new public utility system; i.e. a rural water line project or gasification project.

Sample CAO position descriptions for small and large municipalities are provided.

## **1.2 - Sample A: CAO Position Description (Small Municipality)**

### **Position Description – CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is the administrative head of the municipality. This position is responsible to council for the overall administration, financial management and human resource management of the municipality.

The CAO oversees the implementation and delivery of programs and services that are approved by council and ensures that these programs and services are delivered to all residents and ratepayers in a manner that makes efficient and effective use of the human, financial and physical resources of the municipality.

The CAO is the principal advisor to council and is responsible for ensuring that council is informed of their legislative responsibilities and authorities and all other relevant information necessary to make informed decisions on every municipal matter.

#### **Responsibilities and Duties:**

##### **Administration:**

- Prepare and organize the agendas for all municipal meetings and public hearings and ensure that agenda packages are provided to each member of council prior to each meeting or hearing in a timely manner in accordance with the time requirement established in the municipal Procedural By-law.
- Prepare the resolutions and by-laws for meetings of council and attend all regular, special, and committee meetings.
- Prepare, circulate and post the meeting minutes in a timely manner in accordance with the Procedural By-law, inform, and when necessary provide copies of all official correspondence, to all members of council.
- Ensure all required by-laws and resolutions are in-place and up-to-date and readily available for public review.
- Ensure all the records of the municipality are retained in accordance with the requirements of the legislation.
- Complete all documents, agreements, or contracts approved by council; prepare correspondence resulting from decisions of council, and delegate tasks as appropriate.
- **Policies/Programs/Service Delivery**
  - Monitor, evaluate and recommend changes to municipal policies and programs on an on-going basis, to ensure ongoing relevancy and effectiveness.

### **CAO Position Description (Small Municipality) (continued)**

- Recommend to council new initiatives, changes to programs / services, or changes to the organizational structure that will improve efficiency or service delivery.
- Answer all public requests, inquiries and / or complaints, ensuring a high standard of service to ratepayers and citizens.
- Responsible for the overall administration of the municipality in accordance with plans, policies, programs, by-laws and regulations established by elected officials and by various provincial statutes.
- Develop and promote a strong working relationship with council, understanding and respecting the specific role distinction of council and management.

#### **Financial Management:**

- Prepare and present options for the annual financial plan for council's consideration, including the general operating budget, the capital budget and the five-year capital plan.
- Monitor the financial plan, including the preparation of monthly financial statements and annual financial statement and cash flow projections as required.
- Provide council with up-to-date financial information on a regular and timely basis; identifying any exceptions, and as necessary, options to manage exceptions.
- Ensure that accurate records and books are kept of all the financial affairs of the municipality, i.e. accounts payable, accounts receivable, tax collections, payroll, monthly bank reconciliations and investments.
- Ensure that all municipal expenditures receive necessary approval before payment is issued.
- Provide the Province with financial information and reports as required by legislation, agreements, or as requested.
- Hire and manage the municipality's auditors to ensure completion of the annual financial audit.
- Administer the municipal taxation process including the collection of taxes and management of overdue accounts, and the sale of properties in arrears of taxes and in accordance with the tax sale process established in *The Municipal Act*.

#### **Human Resource Management:**

- Responsible for managing all municipal employees, including the appointment, training, evaluation, promotion, transfer or dismissal of employees.

## **Sample B : CAO Position Description (Large Municipality)**

### **Position Description – CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is the administrative head of the municipality. This position is responsible to council for the overall administration, financial management and human resource management of the municipality.

The CAO oversees the implementation and delivery of programs and services that are approved by council and ensures that these programs and services are delivered to all residents and ratepayers in a manner that makes efficient and effective use of the human, financial and physical resources of the municipality.

The CAO is the principal advisor to council and is responsible for ensuring that council is informed of their legislative responsibilities and authorities and all other relevant information necessary to make informed decisions on every municipal matter.

#### **Responsibilities and Duties:**

##### **Administration:**

- Attend all regular, special, and committee meetings of council, and lead the preparation of agendas.
- Prepare and present reports to council regarding municipal operations. Recommend appropriate action or request ratification for action taken to deal with matters requiring council approval.
- Ensure all required by-laws and resolutions are in-place and up-to-date and readily available for public review.
- Establish and maintain positive relationships with neighbouring municipalities, organizations, and other levels of government regarding municipal matters of interest.
- Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of, and experience in government and business processes and decision-making, and legislative requirements and accountability principles related to government.
- Develop and promote a strong working relationship with council and respect the specific role distinction of council and management.

### **CAO Position Description (Large Municipality) (continued)**

#### **▪ Policies/Programs/Service Delivery:**

- Advise council on strategy and policy with respect to land use planning and economic development for the municipality. Establish and maintain an effective working relationship with developers and businesses. Recommend municipal support and appropriate funding for proposed economic development initiatives.
- Respond to public enquiries and media requests for information or complaints with regard to municipal operations.
- Ensure that sound public relations are maintained by communicating information on the actions and decisions of council to ratepayers and citizens.

#### **Financial Management:**

- Direct the development of budgets and the establishment of financial controls. Work with employees to prepare and present options for the annual financial plan, the capital budget and the five-year capital plan.
- Ensure expenditures receive necessary approvals and are within the approved budget. Evaluate and recommend actions to be taken with respect to the municipality's financial position.
- Monitor the delivery of municipal services through the various department heads to ensure that council's budget (and business) plans are followed.
- Recommend to council new initiatives, changes to programs / services, or changes to the organizational structure that will improve efficiency or service delivery.
- Lead the development of a long-range plan for the operation and continued success of the municipality. Plan, direct and co-ordinate the day-to-day activities required to implement the plan.

#### **Human Resource Management:**

- Recruit, develop and evaluate all management employees. Approve the appointment, demotion, transfer or dismissal of employees, as well as all compensation administration, within established personnel policy and budget. Ensure the municipality has a comprehensive human resource plan to attract, develop and retain qualified employees.
- Develop appropriate communications procedures to ensure that all employees are informed regarding the policies and directions of council. Monitor the implementation and execution of all council policies by responsible departments.

## **1.3 – Core Skills**

All CAOs must have specific core skills (also known as competencies) in order to perform their duties and responsibilities successfully. These competencies are attained through a combination of education; professional training and certification; and previous work experience.

*All CAOs must have specific core skills to be able to perform their duties and responsibilities successfully.*

Depending on what the municipality's specific needs are, some skills will be of greater interest than others – some municipalities may also seek additional skills not listed below. Core skills of a CAO include:

**Technical Skills** – knowledge of municipal administration, financial management and past experience working with municipal law. Depending on the municipality's needs, additional technical skills (e.g. knowledge of land-use planning), may be required.

**Communication Skills** – ability to express themselves clearly in conversations and interactions with others; express themselves clearly in business writing; and plan and deliver oral and written communications that make an impact and persuade their intended audience.

**Analytical and Problem-Solving Skills** – ability to tackle a problem by using a logical and systemic approach; anticipate the implications and consequences of situations and take appropriate action; and analyze the municipality's competitive position, including its strengths and weaknesses.

**Leadership Skills** – ability to work co-operatively with others to produce innovative solutions; take the lead in setting new partnerships, policies or procedures; delegate responsibility and coach other municipal employees to develop their capabilities.

**Managing Change Skills** – ability to demonstrate support for innovation and for organizational changes needed to improve the municipality's effectiveness; initiate, sponsor and implement organizational change; and help others to successfully manage organizational change.

**Goal-Oriented Skills** – ability to focus on the desired result of their work, and set challenging goals for other municipal employees. The CAO must seize positive opportunities that will benefit the municipality.

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## STEP 2 - RECRUITING FOR THE POSITION

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### 2.1 - Targeting Potential Candidates

Potential candidates – those who possess the core competencies for the CAO position – can be recruited from several places. Most commonly, they will come from:

- **Within the municipality.** Always look within your own municipality to see if there is someone who would welcome and benefit from increased responsibility.
- **Other Municipalities or Local Authorities.** Qualified people may be recruited from regional health authorities, school divisions, planning districts, conservation districts, economic / regional development corporations, etc.
- **The Private Sector or Other Levels of Government.** Qualified individuals may include accounting and finance professionals, or public administration, business administration or other university or college graduates working in the public or private sector.
- **Other Provinces.** Be sure to target qualified individuals from other provinces as well.

*Potential candidates may come from within the municipality; other municipalities or local authorities; or private sector or other levels of government.*

### 2.2 - Developing a CAO Advertisement

An effective CAO advertisement highlights the qualities of the job that are most likely to appeal to the reader and will encourage an interested person to take the next step of applying for the position. The CAO advertisement is more than a simple classified advertisement – it has to attract attention in order to get a good response.

*The CAO advertisement has to have enough selling power to convince qualified candidates to apply.*

An effective advertisement will include the core skills that are required of the candidate, as well as all the pluses about the job and the municipality.

Ensure the following components are included in the CAO advertisement:

**Job Title.** The headline must be catchy and should make the reader interested to read further and apply for the position. For example:

**Chief Administrative Officer – Leadership for a Strong Community**

**Position Description.** The reader needs to know if the position is a good fit, just as council needs to know the person is a good fit for the municipality. Outline the duties and responsibilities, and excite the reader by talking about what they will be doing, rather than what experience is necessary. For example:

**Chief Administrative Officer – Leadership for a Strong Community**

Your impact on the municipality will be significant in several ways:

Administration: You will organize and attend all council meetings, ensure by-laws and resolutions are in place and up to date, recommend new initiatives to council and implement council priorities.

Financial management: You will prepare and monitor the annual financial plan, including the general operating budget, the capital budget and the five-year capital plan and administer the entire taxation process, including the collection of overdue accounts and the tax sale process.

Human Resource Management: You will recruit and develop all municipal employees.

**Core Skills Required.** To have the best candidate pool to choose from, do not list a large number of mandatory skills. There will be time to separate the ideal candidates (those with the core competencies) from the others later during the screening process. Advertisements are best when they are specific enough to keep the candidate wanting to know more about the position, but not so specific that people rule themselves out. Include any necessary educational requirements. For example:

Ideally, you will possess technical skills in municipal administration, financial management and human resource management. Strong communication, analytical, and leadership skills are just some of the requirements of the position. Desired candidates will have post-secondary education in a relevant discipline.



**What the Municipality Offers.** The advertisement should promote the municipality as a desirable place to live and work – never assume people know this. Instead, use your advertisement as a public relations vehicle to send the message that the municipality is progressive, professional and a terrific place to live and work. For example:

There will be opportunities to stretch your skills by contributing to the advancement of the municipality's economic development plan. Further professional development will be offered in order to ensure your success.

The Rural Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ is a scenic farming community located in the \_\_\_\_\_ region of Manitoba, offering excellent recreational opportunities. It has a population of 2,000 residents and a \$1.5 million annual budget.

**Salary.** Mentioning salary is important to attracting candidates. It is thought that advertisements that make no mention of salary receive about half the response rate as advertisements that do. The municipality can also include a salary range. For example:

Salary starts at \$xx, xxx; the right candidate can expect a salary and benefits package that reflects their level of experience.

**Encourage a Response.** The response rate can be increased by how the applicants are asked to respond. Consider asking applicants to respond via regular mail or email. Be sure to list the municipal website as well, so applicants can learn more. For example:

Send a resume and cover letter to the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ at P.O. Box 456, or email municipality@\_\_\_\_\_.mb.ca.

For more information on the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ and a complete description of this exciting opportunity, visit us at [www.municipality\\_\\_\\_\\_.mb.ca](http://www.municipality____.mb.ca)

*We thank all who apply and advise that only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.*

Sample advertisements for both small and large municipalities are provided.

## **2.3 – Sample Advertisement (Small Municipality)**

### **Chief Administrative Officer – Leadership for a Strong Community**

Your impact on the municipality will be significant in several ways:

- Administration: You will organize and attend all council meetings, ensure by-laws and resolutions are in place and up to date, recommend new initiatives to council and implement council priorities.
- Financial management: You will prepare and monitor the annual financial plan, including the general operating budget, the capital budget and the five-year capital plan and administer the entire taxation process, including the collection of overdue accounts and the tax sale process.
- Human Resource Management: You will recruit and develop all municipal employees.

Ideally, you will possess technical skills in municipal administration, financial management and human resource management. Strong communication, analytical, and leadership skills are just some of the requirements of the position. Desired candidates will have post-secondary education in a relevant discipline.

There will be opportunities to stretch your skills by contributing to the advancement of the municipality's economic development plan. Further professional development will be offered in order to ensure your success.

The Rural Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ is a scenic farming community located in the \_\_\_\_\_ region of Manitoba, offering excellent recreational opportunities. It has a population of 2,000 residents and a \$1.5 million annual budget.

Salary starts at \$xx, xxx; the right candidate can expect a salary and benefits package that reflects their level of experience.

Send a resume and cover letter to the Rural Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ at P.O. Box 456, or email rmof\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_.mb.ca.

For more information on the R.M. of \_\_\_\_\_ and a complete description of this exciting opportunity, visit us at [www.rm\\_\\_\\_\\_.mb.ca](http://www.rm____.mb.ca)

*We thank all who apply and advise that only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.*

## Sample Advertisement (Large Municipality)

### Chief Administrative Officer – Core of the Municipal Team

Your impact on the municipality will be significant in several ways:

- Administration: You will lead the preparation and provide support for council meetings; ensure by-laws and resolutions are in place and up to date; advise council on land-use strategy and policy; recommend new initiatives to council; and oversee the implementation of council policies by responsible departments.
- Financial Management: You will direct the preparation of the annual financial plan, including the general operating budget, the capital budget and the five-year capital plan and will establish appropriate financial controls. You will oversee the entire taxation process, including the collection of overdue accounts and the tax sale process.
- Human Resource Management: You will recruit and develop all municipal management employees, and develop a plan to attract and retain employees.

Ideally, you will need technical skills in municipal administration, financial management and human resource management. Strong communication, analytical, and leadership skills are just some of the requirements of the position. Desired candidates will have post-secondary education in a relevant discipline.

There will be opportunities to stretch your skills by contributing to the development of a service sharing agreement with three neighbouring municipalities. Further professional development will be offered in order to ensure your success.

The Town of \_\_\_\_\_ is a bustling business centre located in the \_\_\_\_\_ region of Manitoba and offers a full service recreational complex, arena, golf course and arts centre. It has a population of 4,500 residents and a \$2.1 million annual budget.

Salary starts at \$xx, xxx; the right candidate can expect a salary and benefits package that reflects their level of experience.

Send a resume and cover letter to the Town of \_\_\_\_\_ at P.O. Box 123, or email townof\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_.mb.ca.

For more information on the Town of \_\_\_\_\_ and a complete description of this exciting opportunity, visit us at [www.town\\_\\_\\_\\_.mb.ca](http://www.town____.mb.ca)

*We thank all who apply and advise that only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.*

## 2.4 – Advertising Options

How does council go about recruiting qualified candidates? There are a variety of options for advertising the CAO position. Advertising in a newspaper is a good place to start, but there are several advertising options which can significantly enhance the advertisement's reach and ensure you have the widest pool of qualified candidates to choose from. Consider the following ideas when deciding where to advertise:

*Newspapers are only one place to advertise. A number of other options are available.*

- **Newspapers.** Consider local and regional newspapers, as well as newspapers that have a broad, provincial reach, like *The Winnipeg Free Press* or *The Brandon Sun*. The advertisement will have to be shortened to fit the amount of space that is affordable. A good strategy when using a newspaper advertisement is to provide a link to a website, where a more detailed advertisement can be posted. At the end of the newspaper advertisement, simply note the website address where the detailed advertisement can be found.
- **Post the position throughout the municipality**, for example, in the local restaurant, hotel, recreation centre, library, or municipal office.
- Advertise on **your municipality's website**. Advertising the CAO job on the Internet is an excellent way to reach a large audience, allows the municipality to use all the space needed to sell the job, and costs nothing.
- Advertise on **other key websites**, including:
  - **The Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM)** – [www.amm.mb.ca](http://www.amm.mb.ca)
  - **The Manitoba Municipal Administrators' Association (MMAA)** – [www.mmaa.mb.ca](http://www.mmaa.mb.ca)
  - **Other provincial municipal associations** – the AMM has links to other websites at <http://www.amm.mb.ca/links.html>
- **Publications**, such as the AMM news bulletin, or MMAA notices.
- **Network** with people in other municipalities, the provincial government, or other organizations to find out whether they know of any qualified candidates. Word of mouth is a great way to attract candidates!
- Advertise with **job sites** (Internet job websites), like [workopolis.com](http://workopolis.com).
- Employ an **executive search company**. While this is typically a more costly option, such companies have expertise in recruiting at senior levels.

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## STEP 3 - SCREENING APPLICANTS & CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

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### **3.1 - Screening Applicants**

When the CAO position advertisement deadline has passed, the next step is to screen the applicants. Although this step is time-consuming, it is extremely critical because it will help you determine your list of “must-talk-to” candidates and save you time and money because you will target the right people for an interview. Remember that hiring the wrong person is costly, as well as the recruitment process itself, and a well-planned and executed screening and interview process will help to reduce hiring mistakes and costs to municipalities.

#### **Who Screens:**

Municipalities have different practices regarding the responsibility for screening applicants and hiring decisions. In the majority of cases, municipalities have struck a personnel committee. A committee is generally preferable to an individual or all of council, since a committee is able to bring different, but complementary, perspectives to the table. Generally, the personnel committee comprises 2 or 3 members of council – it may also include the retiring CAO.

*Most municipalities have a personnel committee that is responsible for screening applicants and hiring.*

#### **Organizing the Screening Process:**

The selection of a CAO is all about prioritizing the applicants. Develop a checklist that lists out all the core skills needed for the job (e.g. technical skills in administration, financial management, and human resource management; communication skills; analytical skills; leadership skills, etc.) and any other additional skills. When reviewing resumes, it is important to highlight when the applicant’s skills, as

*Prepare a checklist of the core skills needed for the job.*

shown on their resume, match up with the core / additional skills needed for the job. Using the checklist process, the personnel committee should be able to distinguish the candidates they are interested in interviewing.

## **Sample Screening Checklist**

<b><u>Core and Additional Skills</u></b>	Applicant # 1	Applicant # 2	Applicant # 3	Applicant # 4	Applicant # 5	Applicant # 6	Applicant # 7	Applicant # 8	Applicant # 9	Applicant # 10	Applicant # 11	Applicant # 12
<b>Administration</b>												
<b>Financial Management</b>												
<b>Human Resource Management</b>												
<b>Communication</b>												
<b>Analytical / Problem-Solving</b>												
<b>Leadership</b>												
<b>Managing Change</b>												
<b>Goal-Oriented</b>												
<b>Additional Skills</b>												
<b>Additional Skills</b>												

### **Limiting the Number of Candidates:**

There is no hard and fast rule about the right number of candidates to interview – if the municipality needs a CAO, the personnel committee will need to interview as many candidates as necessary to find the right person. A general rule of thumb for interviewing is no more than 6 interviews in an 8 hour day. This ensures adequate time is given to each interview and provides the personnel committee with time to discuss and compare notes and observations.

***A manageable number of candidates should be selected for interviews.***

Using the screening process, a candidate who has the core skills listed on their resume (and adequate experience using these skills) should be considered for an interview. Generally the personnel committee will want to select a manageable number of candidates to interview based on the number of candidates that apply for the position.

### **3.2 – Developing Interview Questions**

The job interview is what is relied on most heavily in making hiring decisions. Successful interview practices will help uncover a candidate’s knowledge and capabilities as well as areas needing improvement – all of which are important when making critical hiring decisions.

Questions should be prepared well in advance and should be developed to reveal a candidate’s technical skills, knowledge, behaviours, and key motivators. It is not enough to know whether a candidate can do the job. It is equally important to know whether the person will be a good fit for the municipality and whether the candidate will be motivated to do the job.

Good interviewers ask probing questions to determine if the candidate is absolutely the right choice and can do the job. Often, interviewers ask hypothetical questions of the candidate – however, these questions sometimes lead to answers that are not based on past performance, but on what the candidate thinks is the right answer. As well, try to avoid closed questions that call for one-word answers. Questions that begin with “tell me about,” or “describe a time,” and “give me an example” will provide much more information.

*A well-prepared job interview will highlight a candidate’s strengths and weaknesses.*

*Interview questions should have the candidate describe a situation, describe how they handled the situation, and describe why they handled it this way.*

There are some questions that are not permitted to be asked at an interview. The Human Rights Code provides that questions of a personal nature (i.e. marital status, age, political beliefs) may not be asked in a job interview. When thinking about whether a question is appropriate, the personnel committee should first ask itself – does the question have anything to do with the job? For more information, contact the:

Manitoba Human Rights Commission  
(<http://www.gov.mb.ca/hrc/> or 1-888-884-8681).

### **3.3 - Sample Interview Questions**

The following are sample interview questions that are based on the core skills required for a CAO.

#### **Technical Skills**

##### **Administration**

1. Please highlight those aspects of your background (education and experience) that you feel have prepared you for the position of CAO, and that make you the right candidate for the position.
2. Think of a time when you had many challenging projects with different priorities to manage. Tell us about it.
3. Please explain how you view the role of council versus the role of a CAO.
4. How would you deal with a situation where one or two council members were making specific demands, but council has not authorized you to take action concerning these demands?
5. There is increasingly greater public expectation that municipalities should be held publicly accountable. How would you respond to public demands for greater accountability? How would you deal with an angry member of the public who is upset with the municipality?



## **Technical Skills (continued)**

### **Financial Management**

1. A key responsibility of a CAO is developing the annual financial plan or budget to achieve council's tax, financial and service delivery objectives. Tell us how you would approach the budget development process if council has directed a reduction in residential taxation levels, maintenance of existing reserve levels for future plans and no decrease in service levels to the public. Specifically outline the process you would use, the information you would provide and some options you might examine to meet the objective.
2. Financial issues or problems often arise in a municipality because appropriate internal controls and monitoring mechanisms are not in place. Tell us about experiences you have had with the implementation of internal controls and financial monitoring, especially where these controls may not have been adequate.
3. Council is ultimately responsible to its ratepayers for the financial position of the municipality. Understanding financial information and making sound financial decisions can be difficult without financial training or background. However, it is the CAO's responsibility to ensure appropriate reporting is in place to facilitate sound decision making. Tell us, as a CAO, what financial information you would report on to council, how frequently you would report and how you would present the information in an understandable way so that council has the relevant facts to make sound financial decisions.

### **Human Resource Management**

1. CAOs are often called upon to mediate disputes, which may arise within a municipality involving staff, councillors, or ratepayers and sometimes between two municipalities. Tell us about experiences that you have had mediating a dispute, your role, how you approached it and the outcome.
2. Have you ever been involved with introducing any new ideas or programs into your organization? Tell us about the program, and describe the steps you used to improve the acceptance for the program.
3. What is the most difficult management situation that you have had to handle in the past few years?
4. How would you describe yourself and your management style? How would you produce a working environment that supports maximum productivity? Please relate your response to your working experience.
5. How would you manage a person with a specific technical skill set that you do not possess (e.g. accounting, public works, etc.)? Please provide examples related to your work experience.

### **Communication Skills**

1. Tell me about a time when you had to be assertive to get across a point that was important to you.
2. Describe a complex process, product, situation or rule that you had to explain to someone. How did you know you were successful in getting your point across?
3. Could you comment on your experience operating in a high public profile environment, dealing with the media, presenting and defending controversial issues?
4. Describe a report or proposal that you wrote that was very effective. How did you know? What was the outcome?
5. How do you keep staff aware of information and municipal activities that might affect them?

### **Analytical and Problem-Solving Skills**

1. What kinds of problems do you deal with in your current job? How do you address them? Share some examples.
2. Tell me about a time that you came up with a solution to a problem that others had not been able to solve in quite a while.
3. What has been the most difficult management situation that you have had to handle in the past few years?
4. Tell me about a complex problem that you solved recently. How did you decide what to do? What were the key elements that you considered? What was the outcome?

### **Leadership Skills**

1. Describe a recent initiative that you led. What obstacles did you face in reaching your goals? How did you overcome them?
2. How do you describe yourself and your management style? How would you produce an environment that supports maximum productivity? Please relate your response to your working experience.
3. Have you ever been in a leadership role where major change is taking place in the organization? How did you approach your part in it, and what are some of the key considerations in successfully introducing change?
4. Describe a group you led whose members did not work well together. What did you do to improve teamwork?
5. Share an experience in which you had to lead a technical team whose members had more expertise than you had. How did you deal with that?

### **Managing Change Skills**

1. Describe a situation in which you anticipated the future and made changes to current services to meet future needs.
2. Give me an example of when you identified and assessed a new business opportunity.
3. Tell me about a time when you were surprised by a change at work. How did you deal with it?
4. Tell me about a time when you did not deal well with a change. What prevented you? What could you have done differently? What was the outcome?
5. Give me an example when you had to change a plan or approach that you were committed to. How did you feel, and how did you explain the change to your staff or the public?

### Goal-Oriented Skills

1. Tell me about a recent goal that you set and achieved. Walk me through your thinking and planning process.
2. Give me an example of a goal that you did not reach. How did you feel about that? What could you have done differently?
3. Think of a job that you held where your goals were not clearly defined. What did you do about it?
4. How do you motivate your staff?

## **3.4 – Structuring the Interview**

To ensure the interview time is used most efficiently, prepare for the interview in advance. The personnel committee should meet in advance to go over the questions and clarify how the interview will proceed. A recommended interview structure, to help keep the interview focused and on track in order to get the results needed to make a proper evaluation of each candidate, is provided below.

*A well structured interview ensures that council gets the information needed from each candidate.*

### **Introduction:**

**Build rapport.** Always make the candidate comfortable and relaxed by using conversation openers and asking ice-breaker questions, such as “tell me about yourself.” Show a genuine interest and give each candidate your full attention by conducting the interview in a quiet, private space with the door closed. Ask others not to interrupt during the interview.

**Provide background information.** Give the candidate background information about the CAO position and the municipality.

**Communicate expectations.** Inform the candidate you will be asking questions first, that you will be taking notes, and that you will allow time at the end for their questions. Explain that you will be asking questions to get specific examples, and that in each case you want to hear about the situation, the actions the candidates took, and the end results. Tell the candidate if an actual situation does not come right to mind, you will allow them

time to think, or you will come back to the question. Ask the candidate if they have any questions before proceeding.

### **Interviewer's Questions / Candidate's Answers:**

This is the part of the interview where you will gather the most information, so take good notes. As noted previously, ask questions that get the candidate to demonstrate their competency in the core skills needed for the job. Pace yourself according to the number of core skills you have identified, and ask about two or three questions for each core skill. **Your objective is to find evidence that a candidate has the core skills needed to do the job and any additional skills that the municipality believes are an asset for the position.** Make sure the candidate does most of the talking during this phase.

### **Candidate's Questions:**

Leave enough time to answer the candidate's questions. Most candidates have prepared questions to show that they are very interested in the position.

### **Interview Close:**

**Sell the municipality.** This is the time to sell the benefits of working for the municipality. It is important that you leave each candidate with a positive impression.

**Communicate the next steps.** Candidates want to know the next steps of the interview process and when they will hear from you. Let them know what to expect, and thank them for their time.

### Interview Tips

The following provides some tips for common road-blocks that occur during an interview.

**Keeping the candidate on track.** The person asking the questions controls and directs the flow. If a candidate does not answer a question with the information council is seeking, re-phrase the question. For example, if the candidate is asked what personal qualities are necessary for success and answers, “you need at least 3 years of experience in financial management,” try putting the candidate back on track by being gently persistent: “Perhaps I didn’t make myself clear; I meant what personal qualities are necessary for success, not what kind of experience.”

**The flustered candidate.** What if a candidate is stumped on a question? The interviewers may be inclined to let them off the hook with, “that’s alright, let’s move on.” This is the wrong approach, because you still need an answer to the question. Try saying, “that’s alright, take your time to answer, I’m sure something will come.” If the candidate still draws a blank, move onto another question and return to the question when the candidate appears more relaxed.

**The talkative candidate.** The challenge with a talkative candidate is to guide the interview to gather information needed to make a hiring decision. You can handle a talkative candidate by either:

- Jump into the conversation with “You know, that’s very interesting. It makes me want to ask you about...” and then move onto the next topic.
- Start talking along with the candidate and redirect the conversation to a new area. Keep talking until the candidate stops, which should be in the first few seconds.

## **3.5 - Evaluating the Interview**

During the interview, each member of the personnel committee should take notes of the candidate’s responses to the questions. Accurate and detailed notes on answers will enable them to more effectively evaluate the candidate’s responses. It is easy to think that interviewers will remember each response, but it is hard to do after a long day of interviewing.

The interview schedule can be set up in such a way as to provide space to take notes on the responses to each question. For example:

<p><b><u>Candidate # 1</u></b></p> <p><b>Question #1 – Managing Change Skills</b></p> <p>Describe a situation in which you anticipated the future and made changes to current services to meet future needs.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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In order to rate candidates on each core skill, the personnel committee should use an evaluation sheet, which assigns the candidate a final score for each core skill. Based on the candidate’s answers to the interview questions, the personnel committee should be able to evaluate how well the candidate demonstrates expertise and proficiency in each core skill area. To make the best decision possible, all members of the personnel committee should evaluate the candidates separately and then review the findings as a group.

*An evaluation sheet is helpful to identify which of the core skills are the candidate’s strongest.*

It is important to have a consistent and reliable evaluation system. An evaluation sheet highlights a candidate’s expertise and proficiency in each core skill area, and helps to show which core skills are the candidate’s strongest.

The following is an example of an evaluation sheet. In this sample, the candidates are assigned a score on their ability to demonstrate that they have met the core skill requirements of the position.

### 3.6 – Sample Evaluation Sheet

#### EVALUATION SHEET

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Rate each core skill, and any additional skills on a scale from 1 to 4 by circling the rating.

1 = No evidence of desired skill (could not provide any specific examples)

2 = Limited evidence that candidate meets the desired skill (provided incomplete or vague examples)

3 = Evidence that candidate meets the desired skill (provided only one specific and complete example)

4 = Very strong evidence of desired skill (provided several specific and complete examples)

<u>Core skill name:</u>	<u>Rating</u>			
Administration - - - - -	1	2	3	4
Financial Management- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Human Resource Management- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Communication- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Analytical / Problem Solving- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Leadership- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Managing Change- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Goal Oriented- - - - -	1	2	3	4
Optional Desired Skills:				
- Economic Development- - - - -	1	2	3	4
- Project Implementation- - - - -	1	2	3	4
- Recreation Programs / Service Delivery- - - - -	1	2	3	4



### **3.7 - Second Interviews**

The hiring process is more complex for senior positions. For this reason, the personnel committee may want to arrange a second or even third interview. A second interview will enable the personnel committee to continue to examine the candidate's ability and capability related to core skills, double-check items from the first interview and explore other areas of interest (for example, the candidate's motivational drive, ability to work with council, etc.) A second interview may also involve all members of council – the CAO will be working with all of council and everyone should have the opportunity to evaluate the candidates before a final decision is made.

*Second interviews can be used to evaluate additional core skills, motivation and ability to work with council.*

When candidates make it to the second round of interviews, they should be real contenders for the position. The end of the second round of interviews should give the personnel committee enough information to make a final decision; however, a third interview may be necessary.

### **3.8 – Further Evaluating the Candidate**

Another evaluation tool is being increasingly used by potential employers to ensure the right candidate is hired. Psychological testing is used to evaluate attributes not easily determined through the interview process (e.g. ability to handle stress, ability to interact with people). While primarily used in the private sector, it is also used in the public sector. The usefulness and effectiveness are dependent on how the tool is administered and interpreted; requiring qualified professionals. Executive search firms typically offer this service.

*Psychological testing is a tool available to assist municipalities in hiring the right candidate.*

While there is a cost to using a tool such as psychological testing, organizations that have built this into their recruitment process recognize that hiring the wrong person has a greater cost.

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## STEP 4 –CHECKING REFERENCES & MAKING A JOB OFFER

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### 4.1 - Checking References

The reference check is the final critical step in making sure the best candidate is hired to the CAO position. Candidates should be prepared to provide 3 references – at least 2 of these should be people they reported to at their present or previous job. References should be checked partly to verify what you have already discovered, partly to give you peace of mind, and partly to give you a greater understanding of how to get the best out of your chosen candidate once on board.

*Be specific about the references you obtain – the best references are current or previous supervisors.*

The following are some sample questions that can be asked when checking references. Not all will apply to the candidate you are asking about – your reference questions will have to be tailored to each individual's circumstances.

#### **Sample Reference Questions**

- What is your opinion of (candidate's) skills in terms of their ability to deliver \_\_\_\_\_ within their current position? (Repeat this question to cover all the relevant core skills required for the job.)
- What is your opinion of what motivated (candidate) within their current position?
- What is your opinion of (candidate) as a team player within the organization?
- What would you say was (candidate's) greatest strength?
- What would you say was (candidate's) biggest weakness?
- How would you say (candidate) took direction?
- What management problems, if any, did (candidate) cause you? (If necessary, follow up with – how did you resolve these issues?)
- What parts of the job did (candidate) have the most problems with?

- What was (candidate's) attitude toward developing needed new skills?
- How adept was (candidate) at developing new skills?
- How effectively did (candidate) achieve your organization's goals?
- How effective was (candidate) at communicating with the public? With co-workers? With other employees?
- How well did (candidate) deal with the public or handle sensitive issues with the public / media?
- What advice would you give me, as a potential employer of (candidate)?

## **4.2 - Letter of Offer and Terms of Employment**

Once the recruitment process is complete and council has chosen the preferred candidate, making an offer is the final step. This is critical in the recruitment process and has to be properly thought out in advance and clearly communicated. Unsuccessful candidates also need to be informed.

An offer should be presented to the successful candidate in two ways: first verbally (by telephone or in person) and later in writing. After the verbal offer is accepted, a written letter of offer should follow. The letter will generally outline the conditions of employment including start date, starting salary, probationary period, nature and funding of fringe benefits, vacation period, expense policy, moving allowance, information on professional development, and information on the municipality's conflict of interest policy. The letter of offer should also include a place for the candidate to sign and formally accept the position. A signed copy of the letter of offer returned to the municipality is confirmation of acceptance of the position.

*A letter of offer should be accompanied with relevant employment information for the new CAO.*

*Have your letter of offer reviewed by your municipal solicitor.*

**As the letter of offer will act like an employment contract, it is recommended that your municipal solicitor review it before it is sent to the candidate.**

An alternative to a letter of offer is to appoint a CAO subject to the terms and conditions of a mutually acceptable contract. Those municipalities that offer employment contracts should include the contract with the letter of offer and advise the candidate that they may accept the contract by signing it and returning the original to the municipal office. An employment contract sets out the terms and conditions of employment, such as the length of the contract, the requirements of the position, the mechanism to adjust salary, the method for terminating the contract, etc.

***Both the candidate and the personnel committee should have input into the employment contract.***

**Your municipal solicitor should be asked to review / approve the contract.** A properly worded contract can limit any unforeseen consequences in the event of a premature dismissal or disputes about terms and conditions of employment. Both the candidate and the personnel committee will have had input into the employment contract and therefore the final document should reflect a common understanding of the commitments made.

For those municipalities that do not offer employment contracts, many have a personnel policy that outlines the specific conditions of employment. In this case, ensure the policy is up-to-date and include it with the letter of offer.

***Ensure your personnel policy is up-to-date.***

Samples of a letter of offer and a letter to the unsuccessful candidates are provided.

## 4.3 - Sample Letter of Offer

*It is strongly advised that the CAO letter of offer or employment contract be reviewed by your municipal solicitor.*

June 1, 2006

Name and Address

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear (Candidate):

**Re: Chief Administrative Officer Position**

I am pleased to confirm that you have been selected for the position of Chief Administrative Officer for the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_. The position is offered on the following terms and conditions:

Your effective start date will be \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_. Your starting salary as the Chief Administrative Officer will be \$xx, xxx per annum.

You will be on probation for you first twelve months (12) of employment with the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_. The personnel committee will meet with you and conduct a performance review after you have completed six (6) months of employment, once again after twelve (12) months, after which time, the probationary period will expire or be extended. The personnel committee will meet with you annually thereafter.

Enclosed is a copy of the personnel policy, information about the municipal benefits plan and a copy of the municipality's conflict of interest policy. Please review each and call <name and contact information> if you have any questions in this regard.

To confirm acceptance of this offer, please sign and return a copy of this letter to the municipality within 5 working days.

I look forward to meeting with you on \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_ at (time) at the municipal office to introduce you to the other staff members and to help familiarize you with your new workplace.

If you have any questions in the meantime, do not hesitate to call me.

Congratulations on your appointment. We are very pleased to have you join our team. Welcome aboard!

Yours truly,

Head of council

Enclosures

I accept the above offer of employment in accordance with the conditions specified above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **4.4 - Sample Letter to Unsuccessful Candidate**

June 1, 2006  
Name and Address

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear (Candidate):

**Re: Chief Administrative Officer Position**

Thank you for your interest in the Chief Administrative Officer position for the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_.

We very much appreciated speaking with you and discussing your interest in the position.

In considering all the candidates, the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ was of the opinion that the qualifications of another candidate were more closely suited to the requirements of the position.

Thank you again.

Yours truly,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Head of personnel committee