

Interviewing Tips for Public Interest Jobs

Do mock interviews Participating in mock interviews (which can be set up through your career services office) will help you identify areas which may require more preparation and calm your nerves by giving you a sense of how and actual interview will progress.

Enthusiasm and confidence are a must. These characteristics are perceived immediately by an interviewer, and they set the stage for fluid conversations instead of a more formal “interrogation” format.

Most interviewers want to know you and not just your skill set. Employers want to know who you are as a person, and why you are motivated to pursue public interest work with their organization. Remember, employers are not just hiring a unit of labor; they are hiring someone with whom they will interact and collaborate, and someone they want to be around!

Do your homework. Many job seekers research employer organizations’ websites and memorize facts/figures (e.g., “there are 14 attorneys in this unit”). These facts are certainly useful, but remember to step back and look at the larger public interest community in which the employer operates: who it collaborates with, how it is funded, whether it has a strategic plan, etc.

Have a demonstrated commitment to the employer’s mission. While academic credentials do matter, it is equally – and sometimes more – important that you can demonstrate a commitment to the organization’s mission through past work experiences, clinic participation, volunteerism, course selection, etc.

Be prepared to discuss weaknesses. If asked about a weakness in your resume (bad grade, etc.) explain it but don’t dwell