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JOB INTERVIEW ANSWERS COMPLETE QUESTIONS AND EXAMPLES

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Introduction

About the ILS

The Integrated Leadership System (ILS) is an outgrowth of the Senior Executive Leadership Capability (SELC) Framework. SELC was established in 1999 to help those seeking executive leadership positions within the Australian Public Service (APS). ILS has taken these standards and expanded them to include all leadership positions. The series of tools and assessments provided by the ILS supports both individuals and agencies

The ILS has provided agencies with a standardised way to assess applicants. This method ensures that all applicants are treated similarly and that their suitability to the requirements of the job are adequately covered.

Interviewing for APS Jobs

A strong application will lead to an interview. The elements of the application include a cover letter, cover sheet, CV or resume, a statement which addresses the selection criteria, and referees with contact information.

Interviews are conducted by a selection team made up of two or three APS employees, usually including the supervisor of the job. When one agency is recruiting for multiple positions, the interview is often conducted in an assessment centre. Applicants may be asked to do group exercises, job simulations, or role-playing.

Five main areas of selection criteria based on core capabilities are stressed in the interview. They are:

- · Supports strategic direction
- · Achieves results
- · Supports productive working relationships
- · Displays personal drive and integrity
- · Communicates with influence

Questions are asked based on these criteria. They include behavioural based questions, hypothetical situation questions, and, in some cases, work sample tests, presentations, or psychometric testing, which may include aptitude and/or personality tests.

Behavioural based questions are those which ask about how a situation was handled in the past. This type of questions helps the panel to predict how a similar situation would be handled in the future. Hypothetical situation questions how the applicant might respond to a given situation. During the interview, one should not be afraid to ask for clarification on a question, or to take a moment to compose a response.

Most everyone is somewhat nervous in a job interview. Preparation is very helpful in overcoming the possible effects of anxiety. This guidebook is intended to help applicants understand how to answer the interview questions posed by the review panel. All possible questions have been included and sample answers have been provided.

Selection Criterion: Supports Strategic Direction

Question: Tell me about a time when you were involved in planning a project, how did you go about it, what factors did you consider in your planning, and what was the outcome?

For this question, the panel are seeking to learn about your approach to supporting a shared purpose and direction and strategic thinking and focus. Goal setting, planning ahead, and an understanding of objective and long-term implications of the work are some of the factors that the panel will look for.

To answer the question, select a project that is relevant to the position for which you are applying, or which used skills similar to those that will be prominent in the new position. Describe the conditions or context for which the project was needed. Next, explain what your own responsibility or duty was regarding the task; for example, if you were the project leader, or a subject matter expert. Then, describe specifically what you did and how it was done. Finally, talk about the results

This stepwise approach to answering a question is known as the STAR method, and it can be used to prepare your answer to any question in this guidebook. The acronym stands for Situation, Task, Actions, and Results.

Sample Answer: "Management asked our group to revise the operating procedure documents. There were several hundred documents and we wanted to rewrite them so that they each followed the same format. I was chosen to be the project leader. As a group, we determined what the format should be and created a template. The documents were divided into groups and each team member was responsible to complete a certain number of them. I set deadlines and check-in points, and performed a final review of each document before it was submitted to our controlled documents system. We completed the project on time and were successful in creating procedures that were easier for our technicians to use."

Question: Give me an example when you were met with an obstacle that was preventing you from meeting an objective/deadline, how did you overcome it and what was the result?

For this question, the panel are interested in your judgement, intelligence, and commonsense, as well as your ability to think strategically and utilise information.

Using the STAR method, begin with the context of the situation in which the obstacle arose and your own responsibility at the time. Proceed to describe in detail what the obstacle was, how it impacted the deadline or objective, and how you dealt with the situation. As always, choose a situation that is most relevant to the job for which you are applying.

Sample Answer: "I was preparing an informational letter that was to be distributed to the public. I had contacted a vendor for some data that we needed to include in the letter. However, they did not get the information back to me in time, even though I had stressed the deadline, and despite repeated attempts at contact. I had to go to my supervisor and request an extension. In the end, I found another person at the vendor who was able to fax the data to me and I was able to meet the deadline after all."

Question: Give me an example where you have used your initiative or critical thinking to make improvements to work practices or processes?

With this question, the panel desires to learn about your ability to harness information and opportunities to support the shared purpose of the agency or department, as well as your strategic thinking. They are looking for candidates who are alert to opportunities for improvement and will take the initiative to pursue them.

In your answer, give a little bit of background about the work practice or process you are talking about. Then describe your improvement and in particular, the thought process that brought you there. Include any ways in which you used information from other sources. Be sure to include how the improvement benefited the business.

Sample Answer: "I noticed that the supervisors were complaining a lot about how long the approval process was for shipping requests. They felt that it was impacting our turnaround times. I started to think about our other approvals and how they were different. For example, the approvals for work orders went through quickly. The main difference was that the shipping requests needed to be done in a specific order – the initiator, then the supervisor, then finance, and so on – but the work orders just needed the full complement of approvals: they could be obtained in any sequence.

When I mentioned it, management was afraid that if requests didn't follow the sequence, more delays would occur if one of the signers rejected the request. So we came up with a compromise that the requests would go to the most important signatories first, but after that they could be routed in any order until all the required signatures had been obtained. This did end up improving shipping turnarounds."

Question: Tell me about a time when your attention to detail has led to an improved outcome.

The panel wishes to learn more about your support of shared purpose and your strategic focus. They want to see that you are dedicated to getting things done properly and that you are attentive to business needs and can see the big picture.

Consider a time when you identified an issue, or devised an improvement, that really impacted productivity or the bottom line. Describe the conditions under which you made the discovery, and detail your thought process as much as is relevant. Finally, make clear how an adverse effect on the business was avoided or diminished.

Sample Answer: "All of our documents were reviewed for accuracy by two people before being sent to the printer. I was preparing a document for the printer when I noticed that there was only one signature at the bottom. There was no requirement for me to check the signatures, but I was in the habit of doing so. It turned out that the second reviewer had requested a revision to be made, but the initiator had forgotten about that and sent it on to me instead. If the document had gone to the printer as it was, it would have meant wasted time and money to redo the letter."

Question: Tell us about a time when you applied an innovative approach to a task or situation to improve the efficiency of your team or workplace. What steps did you take to get the idea accepted and implemented?

Here, the panel wishes to assess your strategic thinking, your innovative thought process, and your dedication to inspiring a sense of purpose and direction in your department. They will also be looking at your ability to align goals of the organisation with operational tasks.

Establish the context of the situation or process that you are talking about, and explain why you felt that a new approach was needed. Go through each step you took when putting forth your idea. Especially include any stage at which you met with resistance, and describe how you responded.

Sample Answer: "There were times that more than one person needed to use the testing equipment, and sharing the equipment was not possible. That resulted in a lot of idle time for the technician who was waiting, and management wasn't happy. It occurred to me that if we had more flexible deadlines and could choose which project to work on, we could reduce the amount of lost time.

At first, management didn't want to mess with the way things had been done for so long. They were concerned that if employees would neglect less desirable tasks if they were given the freedom to choose their own work. But I explained that the assigned work would remain the same, just that the sequence could be adjusted as the workday needed. They could see the benefit and agreed to give it a try. The new system also ended up improving morale in the department, because employees felt more in control of their own time and tasks."

Question: If your idea was not accepted/implemented, what lessons did you learn from not having your idea accepted? What would you do differently in future?

This question evaluates your critical thinking skills, as well as your judgement and commonsense. The panel seeks to learn how well you do at readjusting your strategies on the basis of negative feedback.

If the example you used for the previous question did not result in rejection, say so. Then, go on to expand on what you would have done, or present another example from a time when your idea wasn't used. Talk about how you might analyse the rejection and how you would approach presenting an idea differently as a result. Aim to show the panel that you are not overly sensitive to constructive criticism and can turn it to your advantage.

Sample Answer: "The flexible deadlines were implemented. But there was another time that I wanted to cross-train some personnel. There was just one technician who performed this type of testing, and she often had to work overtime just to complete the day's work. I came up with a plan in which several personnel would alternate the work. But management worried that the quality of the work would suffer if personnel did it only occasionally. I don't believe that it would, but I accepted that it was management's decision. If I had it to do again, I would make a more formal presentation, written and with more detail. I think perhaps they didn't understand that everyone would be fully trained and would be practicing the skills often. I suppose I could have made a stronger case."

Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a problem where the cause was not easily identifiable. How did you resolve it?

For this question the panel wishes to ascertain your analytical ability. They will also be interested to hear how the needs of the business were taken into account as you were thinking about the problem. They will be interested to hear how you go about making connections that may not be easily seen.

For this answer, choose a scenario in which you used critical thinking to solve a problem. It doesn't need to be a big problem. The point is to describe how you worked through an issue that took some extra effort to solve. Include any details about how you used resources to help you.

Sample Answer: "Back when I worked in manufacturing, there was a time that every few bottles, the machinery would jam. We had on-site mechanics, who would get the machine running again, but a few days later we would have the same problem. We weren't losing a lot of time or materials, because the machine would automatically stop as soon as it jammed, but it was starting to add up, and it was highly frustrating. We wanted to figure out what the problem was.

I looked at our records to see if I could discern any pattern to the jamming equipment, but there was nothing there. Then there was a cold snap and the machine spontaneously stopped jamming. That made us think that there was something expanding with the heat, and sure enough, we found a block of wood that was used to support the track on one side would swell just enough to shift the track so that the bottles were turning at a bad angle, causing the jam."

Please give an overview of your understanding of the organisation's vision, mission and business objectives. What does the organisation do?

The panel wants to gauge your understanding of the position for which you are applying. By asking for you to describe the vision, mission, and business objectives in your own words, they can determine if your interpretation is in line with theirs.

Be sure to do research on the agency and department you are applying for well before the time of your interview. In addition to the agency's website, look at the annual report and corporate plan. The better your familiarity with the organisation, the better you will be able to select scenarios to answer the questions put to you by the panel. Presumably you have selected this job because you have an interest in doing the work. The panel will appreciate seeing that you are enthusiastic about working for the agency.

Sample Answer: "The Productivity Commission conducts economic, social, and environmental research to help improve policy and ensure a productive economy. It conducts public inquiries and monitors performance of the government to gather data which can then be used to improve regulations. The Commission is dedicated to improving the standard of living for all Australians through a more productive economy. It conducts regulatory review and advises the government, all of which is available for public review and feedback."

Question: Give me an example where you conducted research in the past. How did you approach the task and what resources did you use?

For this question, the panel are looking at your ability to use information and to plan and think strategically. They are also interested in your facility for inspiring direction and purpose in others.

In your answer, provide the background for the research project, including the reason it was needed and the desired outcome. Go into some detail about how the project was designed and your own responsibility relative to the design. Then, explain how the research was conducted and evaluated. Be sure to include any points, such as beating deadlines, which reflect on your performance.

Sample Answer: "The company wanted to find out more about the demographics of the people who were using their services. The idea was to improve marketing by targeting those demographics more precisely. I was asked to lead the project because of my background in statistics, and two of my co-workers were assigned to the team as well. Because I would be doing the bulk of the statistical analysis, I split most of the data gathering between my teammates. Together, we compiled a questionnaire that would be given to current customers and a selected group of potential customers. The questionnaires were distributed by post and email to our current customers. For the potential customers, we went into the field. In the end, we heard back from about 40% of our customers, and obtained 52 field survey responses. Meanwhile, I had done some research on the marketing strategies of our competitors, combining that with our current strategy to develop a sort of generic template, against which I compared the responses from customers. I used the customer needs as the baseline values and graphed the marketing template against those to determine where we were lining up well and where we were failing."

Selection Criterion: Achieves Results

Question: Give me an example when you were required to reschedule or reorganise your work to reflect changes in priority. How did you handle the situation and what was the result?

The panel wishes to learn how well you respond to change. They want to know that you are able to be flexible and adaptable, and that you can help others to deal positively with change.

Focus on your ability to remain positive when faced with changes. Describe the precise actions you took to reorganise your tasks and any methods you used to maximise efficiency.

Sample Answer: "When I was responsible for conducting investigations, I would often need to adjust my schedule when a complaint came in. I developed a technique of setting minideadlines throughout the day so that I could keep track of where I was on my routine projects, relative to their final deadlines. That way, I could better judge the impact of priority investigations on my timelines. If I saw that a deadline was going to put at risk, I could talk to my supervisor about it or delegate to a co-worker."

Question: Tell me about a time when you were able to use your expertise to achieve outcomes in your work or provide a benefit to the people/project you were working on. What expertise did you provide and how did it add value?

Here the panel wants to know how successful you are at achieving closure and delivering results. They are interested in the ways you have been able to marshal professional expertise, both your own and that of others, in order to support business needs.

The best answer to this question will involve a situation in which you used your expertise in a circumstance above and beyond your routine daily work. If this is not possible, then choose a situation in which your expertise was essential to a positive outcome. Remember to use the STAR method when answering all questions.

Sample Answer: "My undergraduate degree is in biology, so when management was setting up a community health fair, they asked me to join the planning committee. I was able to help with making decisions about what kind of vendors and events should be included. I also agreed to operate a help desk at the fair to help visitors with the events and with any simple health questions. Of course I am not a doctor so I couldn't give any medical advice, but if people had basic questions, I was able to help them with those."

Question: Give me an example when you were required to demonstrate flexibility during periods of uncertainty. What did you do to cope with the shifting priorities and what was the result?

With this question, the panel are looking at your ability to stay flexible when faced with changing priorities. Helping others to adapt and keeping stakeholders informed are some elements that you may wish to touch on in your response, if relevant.

This question is different from the first question in this section in that it deals with rapidly shifting priorities, rather than a distinct change in priority. Select your example with that in mind. As always, briefly describe the background, and then go into detail about your actions. End by describing the final outcome.

Sample Answer: "There was some reorganisation going on in the corporate office, and one of the things they were pondering was to close our little satellite office. The decision was supposed to be made within six months, so we couldn't plan any projects out further than that. There were a few existing projects that would extend beyond that time. We continued working on those, but were also looking for outside resources that could take them over. One project would be sent back to the corporate office, but they had never done this kind of work. For me personally, of course I was concerned about losing my job, but so was everyone else. We all kind of just pulled together to support each other and make sure the work still got done. I was on the safety committee, and I put together a presentation on keeping a focus on safety even while we were under emotional stress.

Also at this time, some people chose to seek other employment, and those of us that remained had to be ready to take over their duties and reorganise our daily routines to accomplish the same amount of work with fewer personnel."

Question: Describe a time when you had to adjust your initial approach or thinking to meet changing circumstances. What was the result?

For this question the panel are looking for how well you are able to think on the fly and change your strategies based on new information or conditions. They would like to see that you are adaptable and face change with a positive attitude.

Begin by describing the original scenario, and the change that caused a re-evaluation to become necessary. Describe your own responsibility in the matter, and how you responded to the new circumstances. Provide some detail about your own thought process.

Sample Answer: "I was asked to design a comprehensive spreadsheet that would perform data analysis automatically. The time savings in not performing the calculations manually would be significant. Some of the calculations were highly complicated, and the required validation process involved hand verification of three iterations of data. We had targeted three months for the validation, but resources were scarce and the complexity of the calculations proved to be confusing for those who were assigned to verify them. So the project was scrapped. However, we still had all this data that would need to be analysed four times a year. In the end, we used a series of less complex spreadsheets that had already been validated, which reduced the amount of hand verification that needed to be done, and a final, unvalidated sheet which did require hand verification, but was not so complicated, since it was based on the validated sheets."

Question: Tell me about a time where you encouraged others or explained to others the benefits of following business procedures or processes. What did you do and what was the result?

The panel here seeks to learn about how you work with others to support and guide them, as well as supporting business goals. Interpersonal relations are an important component to any job and the panel wishes to see how well you do at balancing them with the needs of the business

In your answer, describe the situation and establish the context in terms of the business process. Follow with how you went about helping other employees to become more accepting or understanding. Any situation in which you helped to restore morale or to counteract the potential for reduced productivity is a good choice for your example.

Sample Answer: "There was a time at which there had been a major shift in the way that workloads were distributed in our department. People who had previously been assigned to a single type of duty were now expected to go through a rotation of duties. This made a lot of sense in streamlining the business and improving productivity, but it was of course met with a lot of resistance from some employees. I understood the feeling – after all, some of those tasks were no fun at all – but I did see where management was coming from in implementing the change. Whenever one of my co-workers would start to complain to me about it, I would listen sympathetically, and then say something like, 'I understand why you feel that way. But if you look at it like this –' and I would go on to explain the overall benefits. I helped them to see that they would benefit, too, once they got used to it, because they would be less stress because each day's would be more structured. Most of the time, the people I talked to felt better and did start to see the other side."

Question: Tell me about a time when you had many competing demands and a limited amount of time. What did you do?

This question addresses your organisational capability and responsiveness. The panel are additionally looking at how you take responsibility for managing your own work to achieve results.

This question is a good time to describe any situation in which you delegated work, or reassessed deadlines and priorities. Perhaps you spoke with a supervisor about rescheduling some things, or to clarify what his or her priorities were so that you could align with them. Select a situation that best reflects your own capability for scheduling and prioritising tasks and projects.

Sample Answer: "I was working on a long-term project, and two shorter term projects. Then, one of my co-workers got another job and I was asked to cover his work. I was willing to do so, but I saw it would take some careful planning to keep everything on track. First, I talked to my supervisor to make sure that we were on the same page about priorities. I was able to get the deadline for the long-term project extended, and I created a calendar plotting out what needed to get done every day to stay on top of the other projects. I also talked to one of my other co-workers about helping me with some data analysis when I needed it, and she was able to do that."

Question: Someone has gone on sick leave and you are required to join their team and replace them. The team has a very tight deadline. What do you do?

With this question the team wishes to gauge your ability to adapt quickly to a change in work duties with a focus on moving forward to achieve desired outcomes. This question also touches on teamwork and your personal responsibility for completing tasks.

This is a hypothetical question, so you will be imagining how you would respond in the given situation. By all means draw on any experience that you had in the past but, when phrasing your answer, keep it hypothetical. Describe the steps that you would take to ensure that you became an asset to the team. You will emphasise your own ability to integrate into the team and take responsibility for your own work, as well as maintaining open communication within the team.

Sample Answer: "My first step would be to come up to speed quickly on what had gone before. I would ask the team leader to take me through that. I would also ask for a copy of the timeline and deadlines. Any documentation or references that were being used, I would read thoroughly and ask questions that came up. I would also ask the team leader to be clear on exactly what my assignment and duties are to be. I would probably also talk to the other team members to see what thoughts they had about the duties or any advice they might want to share. Because I am coming in to the team, I would want to do my best to fit in. But if I saw any opportunities where we could do things better, I would mention them."

Selection Criterion: Supports Productive Working Relationships

Question: Give me an example where you developed relationships with external clients that led to a favourable result. What role did you play and what was the outcome?

The panel are primarily looking at your ability to build and sustain relationships with clients. Facilitating cooperation and harnessing an understanding of diversity to enhance interactions are other qualities that the panel are interested in evaluating.

For this answer, you will want to focus on your interaction with the client and how you were able to represent the interests of your business while forming a mutually beneficial relationship. Describe ways in which you were able to anticipate the needs of a client and respond appropriately. If you have never dealt with an external client, consider a time when you had to deal with a different department or worksite that you usually did not have contact with.

Sample Answer: "For one project, I needed to use a material that was only available from Europe. I had to completely research the vendors and compare the prices and shipping, and take customs into account for shipping times. I didn't actually have the authority to make purchases, but our purchasing department didn't have the background to make the right choice for this material. Once I decided on a company, I called their customer service department to find out exactly what I needed to do in order to get the amounts I needed on the schedule that I needed them. It was a small company and I ended up speaking directly with the owner. He was very helpful, and in fact I called him several times during the project to get advice about the performance of the material."

Question: What has been your most successful experience with teamwork? What was your contribution to the team's success?

With this question, the panel seeks to understand how you deal with people. They are looking your ability to recognise and respect the needs of others, especially in relation to individual differences in work or learning styles. Being supportive of others and sharing learning, including mentoring, are other characteristics the panel would like to see.

Select a situation in which your contribution was significant, though you need not have been the team leader. Focus on showing the ways in which you valued the contribution of each member of the team.

Sample Answer: "My most successful experience was when I spearheaded the operating procedures rewrite project. Everyone had strong opinions about how the documents should be formatted. Since the point of the project was to make the documents easier to read and use by our technicians, that was the most important criterion. I gave less weight to stylistic issues; those could be revisited after the main format was set. We sat down as a team and looked at everyone's ideas for readability and discussed them all to come to a consensus. Some ideas we rejected and some we kept, but we discussed them all to give everyone's input a fair shake. I remained flexible throughout the project to suggestions that were brought to me when a new question arose from an individual document, and a couple of times we did make changes to the original template. I am rather proud of that project because it really was a team effort."

Question: Tell me about a time where you were required to see something from another person's perspective. How did you approach the situation and what happened?

This question addresses your ability to listen to and recognise the needs of others, to nurture relationships, and to value individual differences and diversity. The panel wishes to see how you handle ideas that are different from your own. This question also touches on the concept of facilitating cooperation.

In your answer, describe a situation in which arose a conflict or misunderstanding that caused you to take a look at the issue from the perspective of another person, whether a supervisor, co-worker, or client. Include the context for the situation, what your original viewpoint was, and how and why you ended up looking at the other person's viewpoint. Finally, describe the result.

Sample Answer: "There was a time that we were developing a new test system. One of my co-workers and I had a vastly different idea about how it should be done. Our input carried about equal weight, but no one else on the team had a strong preference, including our boss. So I asked my co-worker to explain why she felt so strongly about it. Her reasoning was sensible, but I still thought that my method would work better. I explained why I thought so, but said that I would be willing to go with her idea, since I didn't have any objection to it. We both felt that by talking it through, we both got the respect that we deserved, and were able to come to an agreement."

Question: Tell me about a time where you were required to deliver unfavourable news to a client (e.g., failing to meet expectations or deadlines). What did you do and what was the outcome?

With this question, the panel looks at how you handle communication with external clients. They are interested in learning how you go about delivering bad news with tact, honesty, while keeping in mind the reputation and probity of the business.

The best sort of situation to cite for this question is one in which you personally delivered the bad news to an external client. If you do not have such a situation in your work history, choose one in which you had to share bad news with someone in a different department or workgroup.

Sample Answer: "A project that we had been working on for six months suddenly encountered some difficulties. One of the materials that we had been using was discontinued abruptly by the supplier, and it was not available anywhere else. To use a replacement material, it would first have to be qualified, which would add several weeks to our timeline. Because I was the project leader, it fell to me to notify the client.

In this situation, I began by describing our current status, which was on schedule. I then stated, using neutral language, that we were facing a delay because of the material that had been discontinued. I emphasised that the discontinuation had been sudden and was not anticipated by the supplier, so could not have been anticipated by us. I went on to explain that we were seeking a suitable replacement and that I would keep her posted. Together, we determined an alternative timeline that would account for qualification of a new material."

Question: Give me an example where you were given some constructive feedback/criticism. How did you receive the feedback and what was the outcome?

With this question the panel seeks to learn about your willingness to accept criticism calmly and to understand the value of the feedback. This is another way of looking at your ability to cooperate with others and respecting other perspectives.

In your answer, describe a situation that led to you receiving constructive feedback. The best type of situation is one that arose during the performance of your regular work, rather than the scheduled feedback of a performance review. Go on to explain your reaction and how you went about using the feedback as a learning experience. For example, if you were asked to perform a task in a different fashion, you might say that you adapted to the new method and found it was more efficient after all.

Sample Answer: "No one likes to receive criticism, but I know that in a job, it's inevitable that sometimes it's going to happen. So I take the feedback in the spirit it is meant, which is to improve my own performance and enhance productivity.

In one case, there was a situation where I had misentered some data into a document that was later published. Even though the document was reviewed and approved by two other people before it was published, the original mistake was mine and I was written up for it. Rather than complaining that there were opportunities for it to be caught prior to publication, I took responsibility and even came up with a new system for data entry that would reduce the risk of human error."

Question: Teamwork is an important part of most positions at the level you are applying for. What are your strengths in the area of teamwork?

The panel are looking to understand your ability to facilitate cooperation and partnerships, and how you have guided other people, such as co-workers or direct reports, in their own development. They are interested in the ways that you have nurtured relationships and supported the needs of others in your team while keeping a focus on the goals of the business.

Your answer will include all your strengths in the areas of teamwork. Focus on ways that you have used interactions with others to benefit a team's morale, productivity, and the business overall. Include any time that you were involved in supporting or motivating another employee. In terms of your strengths, focus on the qualities that show how you have valued differences and worked collaboratively in the past.

Sample Answer: "I am very good at adjusting my interactions with others based on their work style. If someone tends to prefer a task done a certain way, even if it isn't my own preference, then I will adapt to his technique when working with him. If I am training someone, then I seek to understand how he learns best and use that method. If a person is having trouble catching on, then I'll explain it in a different way, rather than just repeating myself. I always remain patient, too, so that no one feels frustrated.

Another thing I am good with is moderating a disagreement in a team. Sometimes the two people are saying the same thing, just not understanding each other. I have many times fixed things up by just explaining to them where I see the overlap."

Question: Suppose you are a member of a team working on a project and you realise that you are not going to meet a deadline, what do you do?

With this question the panel are looking at how attentive you are to business needs. This relates to cultivating good relationships with co-workers, supervisors, and clients. There is also an element of balancing the needs of working relationships with the needs of the business.

In your answer, describe both what your response would be and how you would communicate it. Be specific about your manner of communication. Because this is a hypothetical question, the details of the project in question don't matter. If you have a relevant story from your work history, first answer the question as asked, then add the real story as a further example.

Sample Answer: "If I were the project leader, then I would consult with the supervisor or whomever is to be the end recipient. I would present the background for the delay and would ask for guidance, for example, if any portion of the timeline could be done in parallel or if overtime could be authorised.

If I were only a team member, and the team leader seemed to be inattentive to the fact that we were behind, I would speak to him or her privately and express my concern. I'd give any evidence I had to back myself up, and I would encourage him or her to talk to someone about it right away. If for whatever reason, the team leader did not take action, then I would go to a supervisor, and say that I felt the project was off course and explain why."

Question: If your supervisor says 'Don't worry, it will be okay' but you know it won't what would you do?

The panel are looking here to further understand your approach to interpersonal relationships when there is a conflict in thought. They are interested in how you would balance the need to show respect for a supervisor while expressing your own concerns relating to the needs of the business. This is another hypothetical question, so you will be thinking about what you would do, rather than describing a situation from your work past.

To answer this question, focus on your hypothetical interaction with the supervisor. Describe how you would go about responding, and how you would use tact and sensitivity to share your opinion. You may also wish to touch on the concepts of trying to see another perspective and recognising different work styles.

Sample Answer: "I would certainly speak up. I would start by saying that it's good to remain optimistic, but we should also prepare ourselves for a less positive outcome. That way, should it come to pass, we would be ready to respond. I would also explain my reasons for thinking that there was a likelihood that things could turn sour.

My response would depend a bit on the situation. If we were in a group, I might wait to talk to the supervisor privately, to avoid his feeling put on the spot. However, I might also speak up, but focus on the aspect of being prepared 'just in case', rather than focusing on his actual statement."

Selection Criterion: Displays Personal Drive and Integrity

Question: Give me an example where you were confronted with an ethical dilemma in your work. How did you handle the situation and what was the result?

The panel are looking to learn about your personal integrity, professionalism, and commitment to the integrity of the business. This question also touches on the areas of being proactive in situations requiring action.

In your answer, describe a situation in which you were presented with a situation that required you to do the right thing, even if it meant reporting another employee to management or taking the risk of regulatory penalties.

Sample Answer: "In one department, there was a strict protocol for recording the times that equipment was cleaned every day. As I was being cross-trained in this area, the technician who was training me mentioned that sometimes they just marked off the times at the end of the week to save time. I had just read the procedure and it was quite clear that daily checking of the times was required. I mentioned this to my trainer, who said that he didn't think that it really mattered, as long as the weekly list was completed. I pointed out that, since the procedure required daily checks, doing it only weekly was technically falsification of data, a fireable offense.

Because no one could do anything about the past records, and the whole department was complicit, I chose not to report it to management but I told them that they needed to start adhering to the procedure or I would do so. After that, the checks were performed daily."

Question: Tell me about a time where you placed organisational aims above personal ambitions. What was the situation and outcome?

The panel wants to ascertain how comfortable you are with putting business needs first. This question touches also on responsibility, integrity, and a commitment to achieving goals.

Your answer can include any situation in which you found the direction of your own ambition or desires at odds with the needs of the business, and chose to support the business.

Sample Answer: "I had recently been promoted to a newly created supervisory position, which led to higher visibility for me in the organisation. It also meant that I was spending less time doing the daily work of the department, because I was spending more time preparing productivity reports and managing employee timecards and the like. My two direct reports were efficient and hard-working, but less work was getting done because I could no longer take on as much of it.

I went to my own supervisor and told him that it seemed that the department ran better as a sub-group of the larger Quality group. I presented my productivity data, which did show the impact. I thanked him for the opportunity to gain supervisory experience, but requested that the position be discontinued.

I was asked to stick with it a bit longer, the thinking being that we just needed more time to settle in to the new routine. It did get a little better, but in a couple of years the department was restructured and consolidated into the Quality group again."

Question: Give me an example when you had to provide evidence based advice to your colleagues or external client. How did you go about doing this and what was the result?

With this question, the panel wishes to learn about your approach to providing accurate and impartial advice, and your ability to remain confident and professional in any circumstance.

Begin your answer by setting the context. Next, describe what evidence was required and how you went about getting and organising it. Then, go into how you presented the evidence and how it was received.

Sample Answer: "I was involved in a project which looked at the change in performance of one of our products over time, with the intention of extending the expiry dating. At the end of the project, I had a series of tables and graphs which showed the performance of the product. I compiled them into a final graph that compiled all the data so it would be easier to read for the non-technical marketing people.

A meeting was called with our group, the marketing team, and the major customer of the product. I had provided emailed copies of the data so they had a chance to review the results before the meeting. I briefly went through the study and the results, and then asked for questions.

Everyone was satisfied with the results and we were able to extend the dating."

Question: Give me an example where you showed initiative to achieve a result or benefit the organisation. What did you do and what was the outcome?

This question is intended to provide the panel with insight into your ability to be proactive, forward-thinking, and confident in your own ideas. Your energy and drive for reaching goals are other areas that might be relevant to this question.

In your answer, first set the scene. Select a situation in which you came up with an idea for doing things differently, or in which you took action without being asked, and for which the outcome was positive. In detail, describe your thought process as you recognised the need, then developed your idea or took the action. Go on to tell how you presented the idea, or completed the action, and the end result.

Sample Answer: "I observed that we were having to make a lot of rush orders for raw materials because there was no system for keeping track of them. This meant lost money, because the rush orders cost more, plus delays in completing work and a good deal of frustration for everyone.

I asked my co-workers to help me to compile a list of the frequency at which materials were typically used, and then I compiled them all to extrapolate what the needs were month by month. Most of the materials in question were used at a steady rate, rather than occasionally. I then went on to devise a schedule by which we would check the inventory once a month and order as needed. I also created some "time to reorder" labels that we would place on one box of each material, so that the person who opened that box would be triggered to check to make sure that an order had been placed, and to take care of it if it had not yet been done."

Question: Provide an example where you have sought out self-development opportunities/acquire new knowledge or learn a new approach.

The panel are interested in your commitment to continuous personal and professional improvement and how attentive you are to reflecting on your own behaviour. They would like to know how proactive you are in seeking development opportunities for yourself, and how attentive you are to identifying and addressing your own areas of weakness.

To answer the question, choose an example in which you took the initiative in self-improvement, rather than one in which it was mandated for you. If there is an example in which you solicited feedback about how you could improve, upon which you then acted, that is a good choice. Otherwise, think of any time that you actively sought a development opportunity. You may also touch on a tendency to view challenges as opportunities for growth.

Sample Answer: "I have always been interested in computer technology, so I asked our one-person IT department if she could use any help. She was quite pleased, actually, because there were times that she felt overwhelmed. She started me off slowly with just some light support duties involving skills I already had. Gradually, she taught me more skills and gave me more responsibility.

Having me cross-trained in this area benefited our department and the neighbouring group, too, because I could just handle most of the issues that arose right away."

Question: *Tell me about a time where you received a negative performance review. How did you handle the situation and what was the outcome?*

Here, the panel are looking at your resilience and how well you are able to remain positive and move forward in the face of criticism. Your ability to reflect on your own behaviour and recognise the impact on others will also be gauged with this question.

In your answer, describe the performance review. If relevant, put the review into the context of how long you had been at the job, or any workplace changes that had occurred. You do not need to go into a lot of detail about the specifics of the negative feedback; a general statement about the nature of the review is fine. Then, talk about your reaction, both how you felt and how you acted. Finally, explain how you followed through to successfully improve your performance.

Sample Answer: "I had taken on some new duties as the result of a departmental reorganisation and I admit I was floundering a little bit. In my annual performance review, there were seven areas that were rated, and I received 'needs improvement' on four of them. I was embarrassed, but I wanted to show my supervisor that I understood the reason for the marks

We spoke very candidly about the trouble I was having catching on, and once my supervisor understood the nature of my problem, he was able to help me figure out a strategy to learn how to do better.

I got some mentoring from a co-worker, and there was a workshop that I was able to attend. I never became a superstar with this particular task, but I was able to improve to the point that my performance was satisfactory."

Question: Tell us about a time when you received constructive feedback. How did you cope with it?

With this question, the panel are looking at your understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses, as well as your resilience and your ability to maintain momentum and sustain effort when faced with criticism.

In your answer, include the circumstances of the feedback that you received. Go on to describe how you responded, including the manner in which you used the information to improve your performance.

Sample Answer: "There were a group of us working on a project. Most of us had done this kind of project before, so we were pretty familiar with the techniques that would be used. When I presented the first stage of our report, the customer didn't like the methodology that we had used and asked me to use an alternative method.

I explained why we had chosen the method we had, so that she would understand our perspective. I then told her that we would be happy to switch to her way, since that is what she preferred. I explained that, while we would still make every effort to meet the original deadline, the new method had the potential to take longer. She said to do what we could and keep her informed."

Selection Criterion: Communicates with Influence

Question: Give me an example when you were required to deliver complex information to an audience with limited knowledge. Hint: eliminating jargon, abbreviations, appropriate language, clear communication of key points, structuring message

The panel wants to know about your ability to communicate clearly and to adapt to your audience. They are interested in your ability to speak unambiguously and focus on key points to convey information so that it can be easily understood.

In your answer, focus on your techniques for clear communication.

Sample Answer: "When I was performing water sterility testing, if there was a failure I would have to present the technical data to a mixed group which included many non-technical personnel, and those whose technical expertise was in engineering, rather than microbiology. In general, I would give just enough background to set the stage for the results. The relevant data would get lost if I presented too much detail, anyway, in addition to being confusing for people.

I did think it was important for the results to be framed in context, so I would explain briefly and simply how water testing is performed, avoiding or defining technical terminology and leaving out details that were irrelevant. Then, I would go on to present the results, again without using complicated statistical terms.

I always made graphs or tables, because those are easier for people to rapidly grasp. One other thing I did was to make sure to ask if there were any questions so that people wouldn't be too shy or embarrassed to ask for clarification. Because the corrective action would be determined by the group, it was important that they fully understand the implications of the data."

Question: Give me an example when you have been required to negotiate a situation or outcome. What role did you play in the negotiation and what was the outcome?

With this question, the panel are looking for how good you are at persuasive negotiation. Key ideas include advance preparation, an understanding of the objective, and striving for an outcome that benefits both parties. Adaptability is another point that the panel would like to see.

In your answer, set up the context for the negotiation. It doesn't have to be a customer or client negotiation; you might choose a time that you negotiated with another department or with a co-worker, if it is relevant. Then describe in detail the steps you took to reach an equitable outcome, and the end result.

Sample Answer: "I was given the task of negotiating an agreement with a vendor because I was most familiar with their product. We needed to purchase a large quantity over time, and we needed a certain level of consistency to the product specifications, but their production lots were small. So we were trying to figure out what the best solution was. I didn't have any purchasing authority, so my role was just to determine what the possible solutions were, and to reach an agreement with the vendor that they would honour. This was a small company and I spoke directly to the owner. I explained exactly what we needed, and why we needed to have the product meet specifications from lot to lot. The owner explained to me that they wouldn't be able to assure that level of consistency, due to the way in which the product was made. I then asked if they could build a larger, custom lot for us, but that wasn't possible as they were a small facility. In the end, unfortunately, we were unable to find a way to make it work."

Question: What do you think are the key components for building successful, productive working relationships?

The panel wants to know how you feel that productive relationships are built and maintained. One key area is using communication, including being adaptable in your communication style, listening and speaking with respect and patience, and being confident in your own abilities. Other aspects of a business relationship are important, too, such as adaptability, acknowledging mistakes, and maintaining a positive outlook. The panel may consider any or all of these in its evaluation of your response.

In your answer, consider all aspects of the working relationship. Describe the qualities you think are most important and explain why.

Sample Answer: "Most important, I think, is open communication. By that I mean both asking questions rather than making assumptions, listening when others speak, and treating everyone's input with respect. It is also keeping up a continuing dialogue with clients, management, and fellow team members.

Open communication fosters trust on both sides, and that is important. Along with that, being responsible about meeting deadlines and honouring agreements, and responding to questions or concerns in a timely manner. In other words, being dependable."

Question: Give me an example of a time you had to deal with a difficult co-worker. What did you do?

With this question the panel wishes to ascertain your ability to continue to remain positive and confident in a difficult situation, and to keep focused on the business needs and achieving objectives. They are also interested in your use of communication skills to address such a situation.

Your answer should include a little bit about the nature of the behaviour of the co-worker that made him or her difficult. Describe your interaction with him or her and how it impacted your work. If there was any escalation of a direct conflict, describe it and the outcome.

Sample Answer: "Honestly, I make the effort to get along with everyone. I don't take the behaviour of my co-workers personally. There was one time when I was working on a project with one other person and he was very resistant to the methodology that we had been asked to use. He started using a different technique that he felt was better, but the results weren't consistent with mine, using the approved technique.

I spoke to him about it several times, explaining why we needed to use the technique we had been asked to use, no matter what we thought. I was trying to find common ground from which I could then convince him to change his attitude. In the end, I did have to take the situation to our supervisor, and my co-worker was removed from the project."

Question: What do you do when a working relationship is not productive?

The panel are here looking for your adaptability, as well as your courage. Your recognition of the impact of working relationships on business outcomes is relevant, as well. Seeing things from another person's perspective may be pertinent to this question.

To answer this question, describe your approach in some detail. Include how you would use communication and other strategies to address the situation. This is a hypothetical question so you can imagine how you would handle it, rather than drawing on a specific situation in your past. If you do have a relevant story from your work history, you may choose to tell it.

Sample Answer: "Since I don't have any control over the other person, I don't waste my energy in trying to change him or her. Instead, I focus on adjusting my own work style and activities in order to improve productivity. I will speak to the other person in a non-confrontational way about the conflict and present ways that I think we could solve it, as well as ask what he or she thinks could be done. Hopefully, the other person would be able to recognise the problem and we could meet somewhere in the middle.

I would prefer not to elevate this kind of a situation to management, but if it was really seriously impacting productivity, I would do so. Again, I would present the matter in a neutral way, not like I was complaining or unwilling to compromise."

Question: Given a team of three new staff, how would you ensure your team worked productively?

This question is intended to elucidate your ability to observe and harness the differences in personality and working styles that employees have. It will also look at your ability to adapt your own behaviour to benefit a common goal.

Your answer should include any strategies you would use to foster teamwork. Include some detail about how you would train and manage the team. You might also choose to include how you would evaluate team productivity over time.

Sample Answer: "As we went through the training process, I would watch them to learn the differences in their working styles and approach to the learning process. I would also begin to determine what their strengths and weaknesses were. That would help me to determine what tasks should be assigned to which employees, and would help me to begin to devise development plans for them to improve areas in which they were less strong. My goal would be to have a cohesive team, and I would therefore begin to foster that from the start. For example, I might devise ways in which they could work together while learning a new task, rather than independently or separately. I would certainly give plenty of feedback as well to establish good practices up front, and regularly over time to keep things on track."

Question: You are working on a project, you are in a meeting and your supervisor suggests something that will have profound impact and you disagree with their idea. What do you do?

The panel are looking to understand your willingness and confidence to stand up for your own ideas, as well as the way you would choose to do so. The use of clear and precise language and checking understanding of others' comments may also be evaluated with this question.

Your answer should address how you would communicate your concern with respect and tact, and what methods you would use in order to be heard. As a hypothetical, this question does not depend on any experiences you have had in the past. Think instead about what you would do in such a situation. If you have a relevant story from your past, you may choose to tell it as an illustration, but be sure to include any other things you might do, if your example doesn't cover them all.

Sample Answer: "I would speak up, but I would do so respectfully. I would focus on the reasons that doing something else would be better, rather than painting the idea as bad or wrong. I would say something like, 'I'm concerned that we might encounter some failures if we use that material,' instead of 'I don't think that will work.' If possible, I would offer a specific alternative and support it with facts or data, or, if I didn't have that kind of information at my ready recall, I would offer to do the research and present them at a later date.

If the consensus in the room was in favour of the supervisor's idea, then I would accept that, but I would feel good about having spoken up."

Business Specific Questions

Question What job related software packages are you familiar with?

This question is intended to give the panel an idea of your skills and work background. They are interested in hearing about any kinds of software you have used that may relate to the job for which you are applying.

List and describe any software that you have used and state your level of skill with each of them. Include any software that you have used at any time. If you have used proprietary software that a previous employer had developed for their use, mention it and generally describe the function of the software. Mention any software that you feel is relevant to the job, even if it may only tangentially be so.

Sample Answer: "I am an expert user of Microsoft Word and Excel, and I have used Access, but not as much. I created and edited many procedural documents in Word, using the track changes feature extensively. In Excel, I created complex spreadsheets with layers of logic for data reduction.

I am an advanced user of Adobe Acrobat, which I have used to create and edit documents and forms. I have also used STATgrafics for data analysis, but I am not very advanced with its use."

Question: Provide an example where you were able to quickly learn a new task or concept.

With this question the panel wishes to gauge your ability to learn quickly.

In your answer, include the situation that you were in at the time and go on to describe the task or concept. Go into some detail about how you approached learning the task and the impact on your performance.

Sample Answer: "A new software program was created to help organise our data so that it could be accessed from anywhere. There were also a series of reports that could be generated. Because the software was developed by engineers in the corporate office, there was a bit of a learning curve associated with it. It wasn't like any program that we were already familiar with using.

There were a lot of fields that needed to be filled in, and the sequence would sometimes change depending on the preceding data. It was a pretty powerful program, with a lot of complexity in some of the data sets. Some of my co-workers were really having trouble getting the hang of it, but it was easier for me. In fact, I ended up being asked to develop a user's guide for the program, which I believe is still in use."

Question: Tell me about a time when you obtained a confusing or seemingly inaccurate or impossible result. How did you solve the conundrum (e.g., locating error in analysis procedure or use of software, error in data entry) and what was the outcome?

The panel here is looking to learn more about your problem solving skills. They are interested in your approach to analysing the situation, troubleshooting, and determining a solution to the problem. Strategic thinking, the ability to draw conclusions from data, and the ability to think laterally are other performance elements that relate to this kind of situation.

To answer the question, begin by giving some background about the situation you have selected for your example. Briefly explain what the results were intended to show. Describe the results and how you recognised that there was a problem. Then, detail your approach to investigating the error and how the solution was determined.

Sample Answer: "I had prepared a chemical solution and ran a preassay on it to determine the content. From that result, I was to prepare a series of dilutions. But when I did the calculations, the first dilution would require a volume of material that was more than I had prepared. I double-checked my preparation instructions, and it had been done correctly. So I went back to the analyser and started troubleshooting there. There were no mechanical errors, and the temperature was accurate. The next thing I checked was the chemical reagents, and I found that one of them was in the wrong position, so it was not being picked up. I moved it back into place and retested, and everything was all right then."

Question: How did you find the assessment? What do you think are your strengths in that type of task?

Were there any parts of the assessment for which you think your response could be improved?

The panel are interested in your feedback about the assessment process and how you felt it was relevant to the job and to your own abilities and skills. They are also looking to learn about what you believe are your own strengths and weaknesses, as they relate to the assessment. Your answers will help them to determine how well your understanding of your own performance lines up with the interpretation of others, as well as provide them with useful feedback about the process.

In answering the question, provide honest responses to each portion. Start with your strengths. This is an opportunity for you to address any area of the assessment in which you felt you had some difficulty, but don't get carried away over-explaining yourself. Mention the ways in which you felt that the assessment process helped you to understand the position more fully.

Sample Answer: "I thought the assessment was very fair. I really got a good feel for what the job's duties will be like and the kind of strategies and thinking that are required to do the job well. I was very comfortable in the timed test portion, as I am generally good at individual tasks and compiling of data.

I do think I could have done better in participating more in some of the group exercises. I'm not always good at speaking up in small groups."

Question: What types of data have you analysed in the past, and what were the issues with the data?

The panel asks this question to find out more about your familiarity with data analysis. They want to know about the kinds of data you have analysed and how you dealt with any issues or concerns that arose. This is another question that touches on critical thinking, use of information, and your ability to be objective.

In your answer, describe the data sets you have worked with and the methods used to analyse them. Put the work in context of the reasons for collecting the data and how the results of the analysis were to be used. If you have worked with multiple types of data, describe them all. In addition, describe what problems or issues were encountered with the data or its analysis, such as bad or missing data points or results that fell outside of an expected or required parameter.

Sample Answer: "I have worked with test point data, which was used to track product performance. The product would be tested every month and the data was graphed and compared to acceptability standards. In addition, I have done some population studies using multiple data points, such as age, income level, education, and gender. In both kinds of work I have dealt with data points that were outliers. I used an outlier test to determine if the data point needed to be thrown out. Everything that was done would be documented as part of the final report."

Question: What types of IT systems have you used for your analysis?

This question helps the panel to learn more about the types of IT systems with which you are familiar and competent in using, specifically as related to data analysis. Your answer will also give them an idea about your general competency with IT systems used for analytical purposes.

To answer, list all the systems that you have ever used in analysing data. Be complete and include your level of skill and experience with each of them.

Sample Answer: "Our large testing equipment had its own built in PC-based hardware, firmware, and software. The results would print directly from the instrument. For further analysis and data reduction, I used a desktop PC and a combination of Excel spreadsheets and a proprietary software that automatically compiled the data into a company-wide database, from which the data could be accessed by any group that needed it. I was occasionally responsible for troubleshooting user issues with the database, so I was familiar with its programming and logic.

Smaller pieces of equipment often required that the resulting data be hand entered into Excel spreadsheets, also using the desktop PC platform. There was a process for data entry and data verification that was required to be followed and documented."

Question: What are some of the current issues/opportunities facing the organisation? What are the implications for the company and, in particular, the area you wish to work in?

This question reveals to the panel how much research you have put in about the agency and the job for which you are applying. They want to see how much effort you have put forth because there is a correlation with interest in and understanding of the position for which you have applied.

In your answer, go into as much detail as you can while sticking to the facts as you understand them. While researching the department as you are preparing for your interview, focus on understanding its mission and goals. Reading the most recent annual report will give you an idea of current conditions. Respond to the question with facts and data only. Don't make any judgements – positive or negative – or statements of any kind that rely on subjectivity. Aim to be neither overly critical nor overly praising of the organisation. Be honest and straightforward about your own understanding of the question.

Sample Answer: "I know that there are always challenges in addressing policy change and the impact it has on human capital. Economic and productivity issues are a couple of areas that I can think of. In the commission, there has recently been a focus on developing client management and reprioritising human capital issues. I am excited by the opportunity to participate in the research and analysis of data that goes into developing these policies."

Look at the graph below. What does this graph tell you?

You will be shown a graph that is relevant to the type of work for which you are applying. The panel are asking for you to interpret the graph to the best of your ability.

In your answer, be complete in your analysis. Describe each conclusion that you can draw from the graphed data. Include

Sample Answer: "I see that this is a comparison of the rates of growth in commercial development over time. It has been adjusted for costs. The peaks on the blue line show the periods in which there was the most active building and the red line is the average. There was a steady climb during this period here, levelling off here.

This section is a projection statistically based on the preceding real data. It shows that there is expected to be another rise in growth in this time frame."

Question: What was it that made you apply for this job in our organisation?

The panel are interested in the reasons that you selected this job. They are looking for your enthusiasm and the reasons that you believe you are a suitable candidate.

In your answer, be enthusiastic and describe what attracted you to the job. You want to show the panel that you are excited about doing this job. This is your opportunity to really sell yourself. Don't go overboard, but convey that you really want the job, and feel you are the best candidate. Include some discussion of how your previous jobs have prepared you for this position, as well as ways in which it will be a professional growth opportunity for you.

Sample Answer: "I have always been interested in how the Government gathers the information that it needs in order to develop policy. Policy can't happen in a vacuum, and I have seen that the APS is genuinely dedicated to that concept. Some of the programs launched in the past few years, for example, have really shown how much that is true. I think it is a fascinating process and I am excited for the opportunity to participate and to make a contribution back to society.

I think that my skills are well suited to the position, because I have done so much work with data analysis. Most of that was in the area of science, but I think it's a good foundation because there is a lot of overlap in the ways that the data is reduced to reach conclusions and generate projections. I know that I can learn a lot more about how statistical analyses are applied to the data gathered here, so it is a good professional development step for me."

Question: *How did you use the 10 minute reading time in the test/interview?*

Applicants are provided with a 10 minute reading period prior to taking an assessment test (for example, a work sample test). The panel are asking, with this question, how you used the time to prepare for the assessment. In some cases, applicants are provided with a copy of the questions that will be asked in the interview, and given 10 minutes to review them and begin to prepare responses. In either case, the panel want to find out more about how you problem solve and prioritise within a short period of time.

If you are being asked about the 10 minute assessment reading time, your best answer will include how you managed the time and what strategy you used to prepare yourself for the test. Include your thought process as you determined how to go about it.

If you are being asked about reading time for the interview, describe how you approached reviewing the questions. For example, you might say that you read through the questions, making a mental note of which examples from your work history you felt would be most representative. You might also mention if you went over your notes on the department and the job description to keep it fresh in your mind.

Go into as much detail as you feel is relevant to give the panel an idea of your strategic approach to either situation.

Sample Answer: "First, I read through the documentation and the description of the test in order to get a basic familiarity with the process. I then went back and read it through again, focusing more on understanding each step along the way, thinking about how long each would take and where the critical points were."

Question: Any questions for the panel?

The panel wants to give you an opportunity to ask anything that you might want to know regarding the organisation or the job.

You should have prepared at least one question that you want to ask the panel. This shows your enthusiasm for the position and that you are engaged in the process. Your choice of questions should be those which give you a better understanding of the organisation, its goals, or methods. You may also ask for clarification on any aspect of the job duties or requirements on which you are unclear.

Sample Answer: "What are some of the new ways that the Commission is using new technology to better serve citizens?

I understand that the position will require some travel and field work. Can you tell me approximately what percentage of time that is?"