

SAMPLE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CANDIDATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Every congregational situation is different, so the choice of areas of exploration will vary accordingly. But some general areas are likely to be covered by most search committee teams. This array of possible questions is intended to trigger your planning conversations before the first candidate is interviewed.

Make sure to have a general description of your synagogue to begin the interview. (number of members, budget total, etc.)

Scenario questions are helpful to see how candidates respond. Take a specific problem or situation which your synagogue previously faced, and ask how the candidate would resolve it.

Scenario: We are holding a large BBQ and concert where 200 people have RSVP'd in advance to attend. At the check-in table, it has become obvious that people are so excited by the event that they have brought family members and friends who have not RSVP'd but wanted to be a part of this neat experience and check out the synagogue. There is not enough food for an extra 40 people and the amount of chairs set up for the concert are 20 seats short. What would you prioritize in your solution for handling this difficult situation?

Facilities Scenario: On a typical Sunday, our synagogue hosts Hebrew school for X students in the morning, transitioning to a rental program for 100 people for 3 hours, starting one hour after Hebrew school ends, and then must ready the same spaces for preschool the next morning. What are the issues you foresee?

Budget: Do you have experience in the creation of an organization's budget? An understanding of accounts receivable and payable? Payroll? Cash reserve?

What action should be taken by the Executive Director if he/she sees during the course of the year that an expense item is exceeding the budgetary estimate?

Procedures and Processes: How would you go about choosing a new software platform? How would you prepare procedures and methods for choosing and implementing the software.

Consultation: What type of professional consultations would you engage in to further the effectiveness of your work?

Financial aid and membership: How would you approach membership renewal with a family who came to you with financial issues?

Volunteers: How do you attract, motivate, and harness the power of volunteers? What do you see as the role of volunteers for the High Holy Days.

Inspiration: What do you foresee will inspire and motivate you in this position?

Pastoral Care: Do you have a role in pastoral care?

Security - Security at synagogues is an ever evolving issue. Your synagogue has 24 hours to make a decision about an unbudgeted change in security protocols. How do you handle this?

Management: Describe a difficult situation you have faced in the past as a manager - how did you resolve it? How would you describe yourself as a manager? Your communication style? How would those who report to you describe you as a manager?

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Sample Question:

State how each one of the following functions should be employed by the Executive Director:

Planning and Studying

Directing

Deciding

Coordinating

Organizing

Reporting

Staffing

Fundraising: How would you proceed to inaugurate and develop an Endowment or Foundation Fund for your congregation?

More Sample Questions:

What is the role of the Executive Director vis a vis development? How would you characterize the board's and clergy's involvement in fundraising?

When coming into a new community, how do you build the relationship necessary to raise funds? What strategies would you use? What do you see as the benefits of creating such relationships?

What are some of the best practices that optimize the relationship between Board/Congregational Committees and the Executive Director?

Should members without children, or whose children are grown up, be responsible for the Religious School deficit, and why?

Do you have experience in the creation of an organization's strategic plan and if so describe the process.

What do you think your goals for the first 6 months / year as our Executive Director should be and how will you gauge your success at each timeline marker?

A GENERAL THOUGHT . . .

Encourage the candidate to ask questions. A knowledgeable candidate should be asking: about your board meetings, your board responsibilities, the annual performance review process in place for the Executive Director, your historical fiscal stability and your year to date actuals against the budget. As well as more open-ended questions like "In order to be successful, what skills do you think your new Executive Director will need that this organization does not currently have?"

The interview process really is a dynamic conversation with two participants that flows during the allotted time. This allows the Search Committee to explore and judge skills, experience, insight and more, and to do so more effectively than with a simple checklist.