



Completing the Application Form

The application form is the first part of the interview process. It is an opportunity for you to give information to the Interview Board Members before they actually meet you.

Application Forms

Application forms are available from the Human Resources Department, Carlow County Council, County Buildings, Athy Road, Carlow, Phone (059) 9170387 or on our website, www.carlow.ie

It is important that you answer all questions on the application form. The interview board members will assess your application on the information you supply on the application form. If short-listing takes place, the board will consider only the information on the application form.

Application forms must be either (a) typed or (b) completed in BLOCK CAPITALS using black ink. This is to make it easy to read and to photocopy. Please make sure your completed application form arrives in Human Resources, Carlow County Council, County Buildings, Athy Road, Carlow, before the closing date deadline, as late applications will not be accepted.

Before Filling in the Application Form

Make sure you read the job specification carefully. This sets out the qualifications, training and experience needed for the job. It also outlines the duties attached to each position.

Please read the application form carefully. It is a good idea to make a rough draft of what you want to say before filling in the form. You must make sure that your application describes your knowledge, skills, education and experience.

Filling in the Application Form

There are six parts to the application form. Below, we explain how to fill in each part and how many copies and photos you need to send in with your application.

Part 1 – Personal Information

You must complete all parts of this section

Part 2 & 3 – Education

Part 2 and 3 covers general education and, further education. Please take great care when filling in these sections. Each interview board member will receive a copy of your application and will use the information to ask you questions during the interview.

– General Education. Please fill in the names of the schools you attended, the dates you attended and the certificates you received, for example Primary Cert, Intermediate Cert, Group Cert, Junior Cert, Leaving Cert.

– Further Education. This is an opportunity for you to list any academic, professional or other technical qualifications or training courses you have attended that you feel are relevant.

Please give the:

- full name of the course you attended;
- awarding body (for example, FETAC, HETAC or the college, and so on); and
- grade you received (for example, pass, credit, distinction, and so on).

Part 4 – Employment

Work Experience – it is important that you fully complete this section. Start with your current position and work backwards to your earliest employment. Do not leave any gaps in your work experience as the interview board will ask you to explain them. State clearly the Department and Section that you worked in and the dates that apply. Make sure you clearly list your grade and the duties that applied to each position you have held. It is helpful to list your duties as bullet points (see sample application form).

Part 5 – Relevant Information

You can use this section to tell us about any interests you have outside work that may show a particular skill (for example, involved in coaching under 12s' football team and so on).

Part 6 – Referees

Insert the names and addresses of two people to whom you are known but not related and preferably with whom you have previously worked.

Declaration

The final part is a Declaration that you must sign. By signing, you confirm that all the information you have given is true and accurate. Applicants who give false information may be disqualified from a competition or have any offer of employment withdrawn.

The final page of the application form is an acknowledgement that we have received your application. When Human Resources receive an application, they stamp this page and send it back to you to confirm receipt of your application. If you are short listed, you will receive a further letter inviting you to interview. This will state the date, time, place of interview, the competencies, the names of the members of the interview board and your identification (ID) number for the competition.

Application Form Checklist – sample application form attached

- Make sure you complete all sections of the application form.
- Make sure it is easy to read. If you are filling the form in by hand, please use a black pen and **BLOCK CAPITALS**.
- Make sure that the information you give is correct and that you have explained all gaps in your employment record.
- Check First Post for the deadline date for the competition.

We will not accept your application form without your signature.

- If possible, ask a co-worker or friend to read over the form for accuracy and content. Be sure to check for any spelling errors.
- Enclose 4 copies of the application form and any additional documents(1 original and 3 copies)
- Be sure to use the full title of the position you are applying for (for example, Foreman, Housing Maintenance).

You are responsible for making sure that the complete, signed application form is received in Human Resources by the deadline date. Applications received after the closing date will be deemed to be late and will not be accepted into the competition.

Explaining Competency Based Interviews

Interview Boards

Interview boards are selected by the County Manager/Director of Services. They usually consist of three people. Board members are selected based on their expertise and experience. There is a gender balance on all boards. Interview boards are briefed by a member of the Human Resources Section before the interview starts. This briefing covers the competencies for the position, the role of each board member, taking notes during interviews, and Freedom of Information and Equality legislation.

Your interview will be based on your competency to do the job.

What is a competency?

Competencies are a blend of:

- **knowledge** - what I need to know to be able to do the job;
- **skills** - what I need to be able to do (for example, communication skills, working in teams, initiative, planning and organising); and
- **attributes** – personality traits (i.e. understanding, patience, approachability, and so on).

What is a competency based interview?

This is an interview based on the specific knowledge, skills and attributes needed for a particular position. Competency based interviews are based on the idea that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour. In other words, the way you handled work situations in the past might indicate how you would approach similar situations in the future. For this reason, the interview board will ask you how you dealt with certain situations in your previous jobs. The questions asked at competency based interviews relate directly to the essential competencies (knowledge, skills and attributes) needed for the job.

What will the interview focus on?

The interview will focus on the competencies that have been set out for the position. These competencies will vary depending on the position. Some may require an in-depth knowledge of a particular area or experience in a similar role. You will be told about the competencies when you are notified of the interview date and time.

The interview board will have a copy of your application form including Part 2 which covers your education and employment records. The interview board will use the information on your application form to ask questions based on the competencies outlined for the competition.

What are some typical competencies?

The following list gives examples of some competencies. It does not include all competencies as these vary depending on the position.

Communication Skills: This is the ability to give and receive information accurately and clearly and to develop and maintain good working relationships.

Customer Care: This is about understanding customers' needs and helping customers deal with their problems. It involves giving quality service and taking responsibility for any follow-up action.

Planning/Organising: This is the ability to plan and organise your workload to meet targets and deadlines.

Knowledge and Experience: This competency will vary depending on the knowledge and expertise required for the position. Some jobs may require knowledge of a particular area, for example, waste management. This area also includes knowledge of health and safety issues and how they operate in the workplace.

Supervisory Skills: This is the ability to supervise staff, make decisions and manage resources to meet deadlines.

What kind of questions will I be asked?

Competency based interview questions may be slightly different to the style you are used to. They tend to focus on past situations and your behaviour in those situations. Questions are likely to start with "Please give me an example when..." or "Please describe an occasion..." and so on.

What will the interviewers be looking for?

The interview board will be looking for specific examples about exactly what you did in certain situations. You can choose to use relevant examples from your current job, a previous role or a situation outside of work. You may be asked to discuss the example in

some detail. It is likely that the interview board will then follow with some probing questions, perhaps to clarify a particular area.

The interviewers will ask about the outcome of the situation and what you learned from the experience. The interview board will also ask you questions about the information you gave in your application form.

Preparing For Your Interview

Read the job specification

All positions advertised have a job specification which outlines the duties attached to the position. Reading the job specification can help you prepare for the interview as you will see what skills you need to do the job and how your experience fits the requirements for the position. The job specification will also say if you need specific knowledge for the position. For example, to be a Foreman in Housing Maintenance, you would need to have a good understanding of Housing Maintenance work. You may find it helpful to speak to someone who works in the area you are applying for or to ask your supervisor/manager for advice.

Read through your application form again

It is important to read through your application form again before the interview. Try to work out what questions you may be asked. Remember that the questions you are asked will relate to the competencies for the particular job. The interviewers will focus on specific examples from your past that show how you dealt with certain situations. So, think about possible examples that you could use:

- Consider your role in the situation.
- Did you face any barriers or pitfalls?
- How did you overcome them?
- Is there anything you would have done differently?
- What did you learn from the experience?

You may not be asked these particular questions during your interview, but they will prepare you for possible questions and encourage you to think about these areas.

As well as your past jobs, think about your present job and how your role fits within the team. Consider the job you are applying for and the issues and responsibilities related to that job. The interview board wants to know about your skills and experience so, when giving your answers, try to say "I" rather than "We".

Interview Techniques

Here are some tips which may help you through the interview.

Don't

- Forget or mix up the date or time of your interview
- Be late / rush in
- Leave your mobile phone switched on
- Wear dirty / untidy clothes
- Panic and rush into answering each question
- Ramble on / let your mind wander
- Try and answer a question you do not understand
- Give 'yes' or 'no' answers
- Bluff the answer
- Be negative about yourself or play down your abilities
- Constantly reply to questions using 'we' responses
- Be put off by nerves

Do

- Re-check the interview date and time and be sure you know how to get to the venue for your interview
- Arrive in good time
- make sure to turn mobiles off before you go in for the interview
- Dress in a clean, neat way
- Take your time and make sure that you answer the question asked
- Listen to the question and try to answer it as fully and clearly as possible
- Ask for the question to be repeated or re-phrased if you do not understand it
- Give as full an answer as you can
- Say if you don't know the answer
- Be positive about yourself and talk up your abilities
- Use 'I' answers as much as possible
- Try to relax and smile at the interview

After Your Interview

Getting your interview results

Your interview result will be posted to the address given on your application form within one week of the competition closing. The result will state whether you were successful or unsuccessful. After the interview, you are entitled to a copy of your marks and comments, which will be sent to you. The Human Resources Department keeps marks and comments for one year after the competition.

Panels

The Human Resources Department may form a panel based on the results of the competition. Positions are filled from this panel as vacancies arise. Panels usually last for one year but may be extended at the discretion of the County Manager.