**The Must-Haves Starter Kit**

We’ve compiled common must-haves we see across organizational roles. Refer to these as you use the [**Figuring Out the Role Worksheet**](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/figuring-role-sample-worksheet/) to get crystal clear on the job duties and competencies. Pause and separate your [**preferences, traditions, and requirements (PTRs)**](https://www.managementcenter.org/article/thats-how-weve-always-done-it-a-guide-to-using-ptr/) for the role.

While we love giving managers easy grab-and-go tools, this is not one of those! Your must-haves should reflect your best thinking about what it takes to perform the role and its core responsibilities well. You should not only customize the must-haves below (and add more), but also revisit and revise from one hire to the next.

So, adapt these—or write your own—and use the [**Planning for Must-Haves at Every Stage Template**](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/must-haves-each-stage/) to plan how you’ll test for these throughout your hiring process.

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| **Must-Have**  | **Descriptors** | **Considerations** |
| **Racial equity and inclusion (REI) experience, skills, and values** | * **Knowledge and familiarity with REI principles:** Recognizes ways that race and other identities intersect in the work, especially with communities we serve. Comfortable talking about identities such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, ability, or gender in plain, specific terms. Understands the historical context for racial inequity and its present-day implications.
* **Proactively advances equity outcomes:** Identifies decisions, policies, or practices that have disparate impacts based on identity. Is driven to make changes in systems and practices to operationalize equity.
* **Self-awareness and emotional intelligence:** Able to reflect on and describe the impact of one’s own identities—and those of others—in a given situation, decision, or process. Demonstrates awareness of growing edges. Able to hear, reflect, act on, and learn from feedback re: identity and equity.
 | * All staff should develop and demonstrate REI competency, and some roles have greater responsibility to lead, train, or operationalize equity. Consider what a successful demonstration of this competency looks like for each specific role.

For example, an associate might be expected to *actively contribute* to a more equitable and inclusive organization and *facilitate* REI discussions with members, whereas a principal or director might have responsibility to *build and retain* a racially diverse team and *lead* the implementation of a racial equity action plan.* Are there particular social justice issues your organization works on or group identities your candidate should be sensitive to? If so, make that clear here.
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| **Critical thinking and problem-****solving ability** | * **Strategist’s mind:** Quickly grasps the subtleties of complex issues and identifies patterns in challenges. Comes up with insightful, pragmatic, equitable, and sustainable ways to tackle common challenges and produce positive change. Has a successful track record of taking a concept from idea to implementation.
* **Vision and goal-setting:** Adapts to the evolving needs of the organization and thinks 3 (or 30) steps ahead to develop solutions that achieve goals in their realm.
* **Entrepreneurial and resourceful:** Consistently overcomes challenges and leverages resources to creatively solve problems. Proposes solutions to issues without much guidance (but isn’t afraid to ask questions). Proactively asks for help, anticipates problems, and course-corrects where needed.
 | * Think about the most typical problems that come up in this role. If they’ll be “doing a lot with a little,” then resourcefulness should be a must-have. If they’ll need to hold nuance and balance conflicting priorities, then the strategist's mind is going to be important.
* When it comes to raising issues of bias and inequity, staff should be able to raise concerns about racism or other bias without facing the demand that they “solve” the problem. The responsibility for solutions is a collective one and ultimately the job of organizational managers and leaders.
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| **Highly organized, motivated, and detail-oriented** | * **Manages a high volume of work with efficiency:** Has, or can create, a system for keeping tasks from slipping through the cracks. Able to juggle competing demands and prioritize without sacrificing quality. Plans backwards to make deadlines. Asks for help when needed.
* **Attention to detail:** Notices and fixes errors that others might overlook. Acknowledges mistakes and turns them into learning opportunities. Has a track record of leaving things better than they found them.
* **Strong sense of ownership and resilience:** Plans ahead and finds alternative paths, when needed, to get to the finish line. Bounces back from setbacks and rejections. Holds a high bar even when things are hectic.
 | * This is a good place to clarify your workplace culture as well as technical abilities. Is the environment fast-paced or deadline-intensive? Will the person need to ramp up quickly, produce error-free email blasts, or use particular technologies? Do they need a passion for creating new systems or wrangling data? Include that here.
* Ask yourself: What are the stakes if an error occurs? If you need your development manager to follow up on every prospect within three days or make every grant deadline, make this explicit in the role and look for competencies like “triple checks deadlines and details.” Don’t forget to include the ability to acknowledge and learn from mistakes (no one is perfect!).
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| **Relationship builder** | * **Attentive, empathetic leadership:** Enthusiasm for meeting and engaging with people. Empathizes with the communities we serve. Able to put people at ease, especially when there are lines of difference. Listens closely to understand needs or concerns and takes steps based on that input. Gets back to people in a timely manner. Takes pride in providing clear, helpful information.

 * **Trustworthiness and realness:** Comes across as genuine. Says what they mean. Builds authentic relationships across lines of difference, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, ability, gender identity, citizenship status, or other identities. Follows through on commitments.
 | * Consider your [PTRs](https://www.managementcenter.org/article/thats-how-weve-always-done-it-a-guide-to-using-ptr/). For example, have you tended to hire extroverts in outreach or organizing roles? How can you define your must-have to welcome introverts’ ways of building trust and connection?
* Define the specific audiences—across identities and lines of power—that your candidate will need relationships with. For example: Spanish-speaking parents or busy directors of statewide organizations.
* Think about what it looks like for this role to “go above and beyond.” Should they reply to community member emails within 48 hours or find ways to meet people where they are? Define your must-have to match your organization’s definition of excellence.
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| **Inclusive leadership and management** | * **Exercises authority without asserting dominance:** Brings a clear vision and recognizes the value of divergent perspectives. Approaches leadership with a mindset of “power with” rather than “power over” and regularly includes others in planning and decision-making. Able to make and communicate difficult decisions in the best interest of the organization.
* **Models and inspires accountability:** Inspires and motivates others to take action and meet goals. Delegates skillfully. Holds the team accountable and acknowledges growing edges (in self and others).
* **Coach and learning mentality:** Helps others grow. Uses coaching, training, and feedback to develop others and support problem-solving. Sees mistakes as learning opportunities. Seeks and engages well with feedback.
* **Applies best practices in equitable management:** Translates equity and inclusion into plans for staff development, retention, strategy, and improving culture.
 | * If prior management experience is *not* a must-have, say that. Consider whether you might find someone who’s been the “go-to” for others while bringing leadership strengths or talent from non-management roles.
* For executive, chief, or director-level roles, use this must-have to articulate the competencies they need to lead other leaders, set goals, and build organization-wide alignment on strategy and vision. This might include:
	+ Demonstrated ability to make tough calls without sacrificing input or relationships.
	+ Track record for creating decision-making systems with senior staff.
	+ A clear approach to keeping up with all aspects of the work without getting tunnel vision in one area.
	+ Ability to build influence with funders, boards, policymakers, staff, and other administrators and raise money.
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| **Excellent communication skills** | * **Mastery of communications strategy:** Develops mission-driven plans to reach target audiences and achieve results. Demonstrated track record with media relations, branding, digital marketing, writing, public speaking, and web/social media.
* **Clear, precise, compassionate communication:** Speaks clearly on behalf of the organization and advocates for/with community members. Communicates well with others, including sharing context and asking questions to understand others’ perspectives.
* **Produces compelling written and digital materials:** Aims for accuracy and attention to detail. Can learn, internalize, and incorporate our “voice” across platforms. Organizes and shares information effectively — whether writing an internal email or delivering a presentation.
* **Keenly aware of the power of language and representation:** Uses references and examples that speak to the experiences of a diverse audience, particularly the communities we aim to reach.
* **Proactively learns new tools:** Stays ahead of the curve in an ever-changing technology environment.
 | * Tailor this must-have to the kinds of communication your candidate will produce and their level of responsibility in the organization. A communications director might need mastery of media strategy and a nuanced understanding of policy debates, along with the ability to teach others to be effective spokespeople. A volunteer coordinator or organizer might need to be more savvy with participatory tools that build a sense of community online. What knowledge, skills, or mindsets might you emphasize based on these role considerations?
* Think about the audience: Will your hire create public-facing content, like a school newsletter or donor campaign? Will they lead communications strategy, write internal reports, or produce curriculum?
* Think about tech: What platforms, data and research systems, or software will they need to use or teach?
* Think about pace: How quickly do they need to be able to write, edit, or present?
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| **Culture add**  | Customize with your core values, expectations, and other knowledge, skills, or abilities (not covered by other must-haves) you hope to see in your hire.  | Every workplace has an organizational culture and (we hope) aspirations toward growth. You want to hire people that can help you grow into the culture you want without hiding the ball on how it is now. Make the implicit explicit about your core values, aspirations, and practices.* First, get clear on your strengths around culture and name your core values. What qualities or behaviors does someone need to succeed at the organization? Examples: Self-advocate, willing to work evenings and weekends, adapts quickly to seize opportunities.
* Second, identify the parts of your organizational culture that are aspirational. What do you need more people to embody or learn so the organization can grow into its values or strategic direction? Examples: Highly collaborative, works smarter not harder, sets/holds strong boundaries.
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