



Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)- Interview Excellence Partnership (IEP)

FLIP26 Commitment: Fairness, Love, Integrity, Partnership

Purpose

The purpose of the Interview Excellence Partnership (IEP) is to ensure consistent, high-quality interviewing practices across the organization by building hiring manager capability and embedding FLIP26 (Fairness, Love, Integrity, Partnership) into all hiring decisions.

IEP establishes standardized interviewing expectations, temporary HR partnership, and a formal certification process so that interviewing is treated as a core leadership responsibility, not an administrative task.

Scope

This SOP applies to:

- All hiring managers involved in interviewing and selection
- All HR Business Partners and HR leadership supporting hiring
- All roles requiring structured interviews (excludes emergency or temporary staffing unless approved by HR Leadership)

New Hire Leaders

Leaders hired or promoted into roles with interviewing responsibility are required to complete Interview Excellence Partnership (IEP) certification before conducting interviews independently. Until certification is completed, new hire leaders may participate in interviews only with HR support under Tier I or Tier II interview models.

Definitions

Tier I – HR-Led Demonstration Interview: A Tier I interview is an HR-led interview conducted to model best-in-class interviewing standards. HR leads the interview while the hiring manager observes, takes notes using the scorecard, and participates in the post-interview debrief. Tier I interviews are used for new or unproven hiring managers or in situations where interview quality presents risk. The purpose is to establish expectations around structure, probing, reliability weighting, and decision quality. Participation in Tier I alone does not qualify a manager for certification.

Tier II – HR-Supported Co-Interview: A Tier II interview is a co-interview in which the hiring manager leads the interview with active HR support. HR observes the interview, intervenes as needed to maintain structure or mitigate bias, completes the interview scorecard, and leads the feedback debrief. Tier II interviews are used to reinforce skills, assess consistency, and prepare managers for independent interviewing. Successful Tier II performance is required before progressing to Tier III.





Tier III – HR Observation Interview (Certification Phase): A Tier III interview is an HR-observed **interview** where the hiring manager leads independently and HR observes without intervention. HR completes the scorecard and conducts a post-interview debrief to assess readiness for certification. Tier

III interviews are used to validate consistent application of interview standards, sound judgment, and effective decision-making. Certification is granted only after successful Tier III performance.

Certification: Certification confirms that a hiring manager or HR partner has demonstrated consistent, independent application of structured interviewing standards, sound judgment, and evidence-based hiring decisions. Certification authorizes the individual to conduct interviews without routine HR support. Certification is role-specific and may be reviewed or revoked if standards are not maintained.

Guiding Principles (FLIP26)

IEP operates under the following principles:

- **Fairness:**
Candidates are evaluated using consistent questions, criteria, and scoring tools.
- **Love:**
Interviews are conducted respectfully, professionally, and with genuine listening.
- **Integrity:**
Hiring decisions are evidence-based, aligned to role requirements, and documented honestly.
- **Partnership:**
HR supports and coaches managers to build capability, exiting once proficiency is demonstrated.

Roles & Responsibilities

Hiring Managers

- Prepare for interviews by reviewing guides and defining success criteria
- Participate in HR-supported interviews when assigned
- Accept coaching and feedback
- Use interview guides and scorecards consistently
- Achieve and maintain interviewer certification

HR Business Partners (HRBPs)

- Serve as certified interview coaches and observers
- Lead Tier I and Tier II interviews as assigned
- Evaluate interview effectiveness using standardized scorecards
- Conduct post-interview debriefs
- Recommend certification or continued support
- Document outcomes per HR standards

HR Leadership (Director / VP HR)

- Own program governance and standards
- Certify HRBPs as qualified interviewers
- Handle escalations and exceptions
- Report metrics to executive leadership





- Ensure alignment with 2026 people strategy
- Serve as the final decision-maker for certification disputes or exceptions

Interview Requirements

Standard Interview Guides

All interviews must utilize the approved interview guides and scorecards aligned to the role. Interviews conducted without the use of standard tools are not considered compliant with the Interview Excellence Partnership.

HR Involvement Requirement

Hiring managers who are not certified under the Interview Excellence Partnership (IEP) may not conduct interviews independently. Until certification is achieved, interviews must follow Tier I or Tier II interview models with HR involvement.

Triangulated Interviews

Final interviews for Store Manager, General Manager, and above roles require a triangulated interview process. At least two WhiteWater interviewers must participate in the final interview stage. Interviewers may include peers or leaders and are not required to be site-specific. Interviews may be conducted in person or virtually. Final hiring decisions must be reached jointly by the participating interviewers and documented prior to offer approval.

Hiring Decision Documentation

All hiring decisions must be supported by completed interview scorecards and documented feedback aligned to role-specific criteria. Undocumented decisions are not permitted.

HR Interview Support Model:

Tier	HR Role	Hiring Manager Role	Use Case
Tier I - Demonstrate	HR leads interview	HM observes	New or struggling managers
Tier II - Co-Interview	HR + HM share	HM leads with support	Skill reinforcement
Tier III - Observe	HR observes	HM leads	Certification phase

Non-Negotiable Requirement:

Every HR-supported interview must include a 10-minute post-interview debrief.

Program Phases & Procedures

Phase 1 – Program Launch (Weeks 1–2)

Objective: Establish expectations and begin targeted HR support.





Procedure:

1. HR Leadership formally announces IEP.
2. HR identifies priority managers:
 - o New managers
 - o High-volume hiring roles
 - o Managers with high turnover or quality issues
3. HR assigns interview tier per manager.
4. Managers are notified of expectations and preparation requirements.

Phase 2 – HR Certification (Weeks 1–3)

Objective: Ensure HR capability before scaling support.

HRBP Qualification Requirements:

- Structured behavioral interviewing proficiency
- Legal compliance and bias mitigation
- Use of standardized interview guides
- Live coaching and redirection skills
- Post-interview debrief facilitation

Certification Process:

- Week 1: Shadow Lead BP/Director
- Week 2: Conduct mock and/or live interviews
- Certification approved by HR Leadership
- Only certified HRBPs may lead Tier I or Tier II interviews

Phase 3 – Manager Enablement (Weeks 3–12)

Objective: Build manager interviewing capability at scale.

Manager Preparation Requirements:

- Review interview guide prior to interview
- Define role-specific success criteria
- Commit to post-interview debrief

If preparation is incomplete, HR will reschedule the interview.

Post-Interview Evaluation:

HRBP completes Manager Interview Effectiveness Scorecard covering:

- Question quality
- Listening vs. talking
- Follow-up probing
- Alignment to role criteria
- Use of standard questions and rubric

Phase 4 – Certification & Exit Strategy (Ongoing)

Managers are certified as independent interviewers when they:

- Successfully lead 2–3 HR-observed interviews
- Demonstrate consistent rubric usage





- Make hiring decisions aligned to documented role requirements

Post-Certification:

- HR no longer sits in routinely
- Quarterly spot-checks or escalation-based support only

Metrics & Reporting

HR Leadership will track and report the following:

Monthly

- Number of HR-supported interviews
- Manager certification progress
- Percentage of interviews conducted by certified interviewers

Quarterly (Executive Leadership):

- Percentage of certified managers
- 90-day quality-of-hire outcomes
- Turnover tied to uncertified interviewers
- Time-to-fill trends

Compliance & Enforcement

- Interview guides and scorecards are mandatory.
- Non-compliance may result in:
 - o Continued HR oversight
 - o Escalation to Operations leadership
 - o Delayed or paused requisitions (as determined by HR Leadership)

Continuous Improvement

IEP will be reviewed annually to:

- Adjust certification standards
- Incorporate feedback
- Align with evolving business needs
- Support long-term leadership development goals

Disclaimer:

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is intended to provide general guidance and does not create a contract, express or implied. The Company reserves the right to modify, suspend, or discontinue this SOP at any time, with or without notice. In the event of a conflict between this SOP and applicable law or Company policy, applicable law and Company policy will govern.

