Hiring qualified individuals contributes to your farm's overall strategic success. This guide to hiring new employees will assist in managing the process.

In hiring the most qualified candidates for positions, follow this nine-step process. Forms referenced are part of the Barn Culture Tool Kit.

**Step One: Create or Update the Job Description**
A typical hiring mistake is to jump into the recruitment process without knowing exactly what you are looking for. Several candidates could appear to fit the bill. Without using a job description, you risk hiring someone based on a first impression, sometimes without getting to those behaviors that enable long-term success in the position.

A job description should be on hand for every position in the company. This job description is used for employment procedures such as hiring, to determine appropriate compensation for the position, to identify and develop training needed for the position, and to assist in performance appraisal.

A job description should include:
- Duties and responsibilities of the position
- Information about working conditions, tools and equipment used
- Knowledge and skills required for the position
- Reporting relationships and interactions with other positions within the company

**Options for Assuring an Accurate Job Description**

**Option 1: Analyze the current job description for the open position. Review the job description as necessary.**
It is advantageous to have a job description for the current opening already on hand. However, you should not assume it is an accurate reflection of the job. The best job descriptions are continuously improved documents updated regularly as responsibilities change. Those responsible for hiring, as well as others in the company who have a supervisory or role related to a particular position should take time to look at the description closely based on the criteria above and current business needs. Recruiting for an open position is the perfect time to make changes in roles and responsibilities. Identify needs for the future and review job descriptions accordingly.

**Option 2: Adapt a sample position from many already created in the Barn Culture Toolkit.**
The National Pork Board resources provide several general job descriptions. When hiring for a position you may choose a job description close to what you are looking for and modify the description to create an accurate reflection of the job, again taking into consideration what you need for the future of the business.

**Option 3: Use Job Analysis Form to gather the appropriate information and create a unique job description.**
Job analysis is a process to identify and determine, in detail, the particular job duties and relative importance of these duties for a given job. The Barn Culture Toolkit provides a template to assist with this process. When using the job analysis form, gather input from those currently in the position and of those who interact with the position. Again, this is a "What would be ideal?" and "What are our needs for the future?"
Step Two: Search for the Best
Finding the best candidates for the open position is the company’s primary goal. With the job description available, you have a good picture of what hiring managers are looking for in terms of a candidate’s knowledge, skill, background and experience. Much of this information will be available to the applicants they complete the application form.

Application
Before announcing the open position, an application form should be available. When completed, it provides the hiring manager with a detailed overview of each applicant’s work history, skills, interests, and education. The form also offers applicants an opportunity to describe themselves and to outline unique abilities and experience. The Barn Culture Toolkit provides a template to assist with this process.

For some positions, candidates may be asked to submit a resume. Each one will have a style and content unique to the applicant. There will be little consistency between them. The application form should also be completed at the time of or prior to, an interview. The application form fills in gaps from the resume, providing the necessary information to move forward with the candidate, as well as enabling equal comparison of all candidates.

Recruiting Internal Candidates
When looking for applicants, the company should not overlook potential internal candidates. To retain the best employees, they should see their future with your company. If employees have been given development opportunities, they may be the best fit for the position.

Internal applicants should be given the opportunity and encouraged to apply. Even if there appears to be a good candidate for the position, it is best practice to open the position up for applications from others in order to determine additional interest in the opening. Open positions should be posted in a location where current staff can see the opportunities. If internal applicants do not qualify for the open position, there should be an opportunity for discussion on ways that they can fill the gaps in their knowledge/skill/experience for future opportunities.

Recruiting External Candidates
As the company looks externally for new hires, representatives should consider recruiting options in addition to traditional newspaper and internet advertising. In many cases, the alternatives may provide equal or a better group of qualified candidates. Some options include:

An employee referral program. Programs can be structured in numerous ways. Some offer incentives/rewards to employees for each referral resulting in a successful hire and a designated length of service (often six to twelve months.) Others focus their use on specific job openings, particularly those requiring a special skill set. The goal and practice of the referral program should encourage employees to refer individuals that will be a good fit for the position and the team.

Hire a third-party recruiter. Using your business name to advertise openings, the recruiter will often screen out unqualified applicants. This method can be effective in some of the other hiring stages such as background checks, etc. Good recruiting companies should commit to regular communication and have a good understanding of the job position, qualifications, experience, etc., that is being sought.

Develop your networking infrastructure. Use the network of agriculture associates, vendors, and organizations to get the word out that there is an open position. To add extra validation, prepare a packet for distribution to interested parties. Include basic company information, job description, and contact information.

Collaborate with educational institutions. Consider candidates from area high schools (and programs), and particularly area colleges that support agricultural programs. Direct hire or sponsoring student internships is a great way to take advantage of potential young talent and introduce new people to rewarding careers in the pork industry.
Go to Web sites where candidates are posting their resumes. Check ag-related sites (job boards) when the location or job position scope affords the opportunity. Be prepared, however, to spend more time looking through potential candidates. Generally, this method supports a search where candidates are selected based on the list of core characteristics rather than current swine experience.

Post the opening in appropriate public locations. Work with vendors, partners, or local retail establishments that potential candidates may visit frequently to post job openings. Many such establishments will be happy to do this as a value-added item in their community relationship.

Step Three: Screen Applicants
The process for narrowing the list of candidates to the most qualified is known as 'screening'. Recruiters and hiring managers will want to take time and care as they move towards selecting the best new hire possible. Screening a pool of candidate enables you to focus valuable time on the right individuals.

Thoroughly review all candidates' applications and/or resumes before selecting candidates to interview.
• Look for those candidates who best match stated qualifications.
• Identify red flags such as unexplained long spans of time between jobs, frequent job changes in recent years, lack of references, or signs of questionable ethical work in the application.

The applications and resumes should be divided into two piles to indicate level of interest in interviewing them. Keep all applications/resumes for later communication.

Once a pool of applicants has been screened, a time should be spent with this group moving forward in the interviewing and selection process. If the list needs narrowing further, consider a brief phone interview with each.
• Use a phone interview form to limit inquiries during that conversation to qualifications and abilities necessary to perform the job. Salary expectations may also be confirmed.

Step Four: Prepare for Interviews
A great deal of hiring is conducted based on nothing more than instinct. That very simply equates to hiring based on assumption and intuition. Therefore, you may be likely to see employee turnover because that instinct is not very accurate. Remind all involved in the hiring process that the company wants to hire the person who will be most successful in the position.

Prepare for the interview by doing the following:

Contact the best candidates and arrange individually for 30 to 45 minute in-person interviews. Prepare candidates at that time for the interview by briefing them on your company and the basics of the position. This allows time in the interview to concentrate on the important issues and to determine if the candidate's skills and qualities are a good fit for the company.

Determine who will be included in the interview process. Use an interview team, if appropriate. A team of no more than two to three interviewers is optimal. Any more can be too intimidating for the candidate and feel more like an interrogation. While having one individual conduct the interview is acceptable, interview teams can bring great benefits.
• One decision-maker will tend to hire people similar to him or her. The team approach encourages a closer, more objective look at the skills and experience that goes along with the candidate’s personality.

• Interview teams are more prepared and can improve the casual process that an interview can sometimes become. Directed conversation is necessary and informative. Being too conversational may distract from getting answers to job-related abilities and could lead to legal trouble.

• The candidate’s supervisor should be a member of the interview team whenever possible.

Arrange an appropriate interview location. A place that is quiet and conducive to conversation is best for the formal interview process. Seating should be arranged so that the interviewer(s) and the candidate can easily talk without distractions. A tour of the operation or job-specific work environment may be a good follow-up to the interview. If a farm visit is included, inform the interviewee ahead of time to be sure any biosecurity requirements are met.

Prepare the basic interview questions ahead of time. This ensures that questions are job-related. Focus on questions about past job performance, since past behavior on the job is the best predictor of future job performance. These questions should be good, probing and legal interview questions. If the information is not needed or relevant to the job, do not ask. Consider how questions are worded in order to stay within legal bounds. For example, you cannot ask, “Are you a US citizen?” However, you may ask, “Are you authorized to work in the United States?” Questions should dig into details but remain within the acceptable lines of questioning.

• Team interview questions should also be prepared upon ahead of time. They should also be discussed, and members should determine who will ask what.

Create the questions as a guide for the interview, with space for interviewers to take notes.

Prepare the candidate evaluation form. Again, to avoid hiring based only on personal instinct, job expectations have been detailed and aligned interview questions have been created. After the interviews, candidates should be compared to one another. The evaluation form, completed after the interview, helps when evaluating each candidate on the same criteria.

Step Five: Interview the Candidates

The interview process allows for the first impression of the candidate. More importantly, it allows for validation of the first impression. In the interview, hiring managers can learn more about the candidate and their fit with the open position.

Establish rapport. Greet the candidate as they arrive. If interviewing as a team, make introductions. Make the candidate feel welcome and at ease.

Ask questions, focusing on past job performance. Begin the interview with a brief review of the job description. This may have been done during a phone interview if conducted as part of the screening process. Since past behavior on the job is the best predictor of future job performance, questions should focus on what the candidate did in the past and how they did it. The interview guide created in Step 4 follows this best practice.

Additional tips for the interviewing process include:

Probe to clarify understanding. There are times when the candidate does not give enough specific information to give a good indication of their past performance. To probe, ask for more detail or an example. Use phrases to gather more information, such as:

• Tell me about a time...
• Describe the situation...
• Tell me exactly how you dealt with...
• Think of a specific time you ..., and then tell me about what you did.

This information about the past helps provide an indicator of future performance.
Allow silence. Candidates need time to think about their response to a question posed. Be comfortable with this break in the conversation. Do not rush to fill the silence with conversation or by moving to another question. Give them time to gather their thoughts.

Seek contrary evidence. When a candidate seems almost too good to be true, they might be. Your desire to find a perfect candidate can sometimes cloud judgment. You should consider asking a question such as: "It sounds like you have done a fantastic job in the past as an animal caretaker, but obviously we are not all perfect. Tell me about a time when things did not go as planned." Conversely, if a person sounds as though they just do not fit, do not give up too fast. Ask questions to make sure that the assessment of the interviewee is on correct.

Allow the candidate to ask questions. Once the interviewers have completed their questions and have a good picture of the individual's potential fit for the position and the company, the candidate should be given an opportunity to ask questions. Allow several minutes at the end of the interview for this.

Close the interview. Thank you the candidate for their time and interest in the position. Ensure that the application form has been completed. Without making promises, inform them of the hiring timeframe and the next steps in this process. Escort the candidate to the exit as a courtesy and gesture of professionalism.

Complete the Candidate Evaluation Form. As a way to easily compare candidates later, complete this form immediately after each interview. Add to the notes on the interview guide, and capture as much relevant information as possible. As you move from one interview to the next, it will be more difficult to recall details of conversations with individual candidates.

Step Six: Select the Best Candidate
After completing the interview process, it is time to make a decision regarding which candidate to hire. Look at the interview notes and compare candidate evaluation forms.

- How do the candidates compare with the qualifications and traits required for the job?
- How do candidates compare to each other?
- Which candidate is the best qualified and the best fit for the company?

Hiring professionals should delay hiring if they are not confident there is a good candidate for the position. A bad hire will lead to an unproductive employee or possible termination, and the cost of turnover is high. Turnover costs include recruiting costs, the time to screen and interview new candidates, and the time and cost to train the new employee, in addition to the cost of lost work time while all this is taking place. Costs could range from 35 percent to as much the 100 percent of the employee's annual salary.

Step Seven: Conduct Background Checks
Background checks are sometimes of great benefit. Keep in mind that no matter how complete a job interview was, a candidate may only have offered exactly what they thought the interviewer(s) would want to hear. Once a decision has been made regarding which applicants you would like to hire:

- Complete reference checks.
- Conduct background checks, as appropriate, and in accordance with state and local laws.
- Arrange a pre-employment drug and alcohol screens, as appropriate, and in accordance with state and local laws.

For more information, see "Understanding Background Checks" in the Barn Culture Toolkit.
Step Eight: Extend the Job Offer
Before extending to the first choice candidate, make sure the process is complete. For example, there is an application in hand? Have initial references been checked?

Contact the candidate and extend the offer of employment and starting wage. Any offer made at this point should be contingent upon satisfactory completion of required testing and background checks, if those checks are in process. Clarify this with the candidate.

- Identify the mutually acceptable start date for employment.
- Follow up with a letter confirming position and wage, as well as instructions for arrival on the new hire's start date and his / her first day's schedule.

Notify other applicants that the position has been filled. This may be done with a post card or letter or, for interviewed candidates, a personal phone call may be appropriate.

- Let all applicants know the company will keep them in mind for future openings that may fit their skill set and interests. Maintain a file of the resumes received according to company policy and legal requirements.

Step Nine: Plan for Orientation
On the initial start date, new employees will complete required paperwork and begin their orientation. Supervisors should complete the new hire checklist with new employees and work through the orientation manual.