

# Conducting Reference Checks

After completing all the interviews, select the top two candidates based on the best evaluations and proceed with contacting their references. Reference checks are an essential part of the hiring process and should always be conducted to:

- **Verify candidate information:** Confirm details about previous positions, including roles on farms or in agricultural businesses, and the length of employment.
- **Assess abilities and skills:** Verify and evaluate the candidate's skills and capabilities, such as proficiency with farming equipment, knowledge of agricultural practices, or ability to handle livestock.
- **Use the Reference Check Form:** To streamline the process, ask candidates to bring a completed reference check form to the interview. This will ensure you have all the necessary information at hand when checking references.

## Tips for Conducting Reference Checks

Many of the principles that apply to selection interviews also apply to reference checks. Here are some key tips tailored to agricultural positions:

- **Ask Behavioural Questions:** Behavioural questions help assess future job performance by focusing on past experiences. When conducting reference checks, ask questions like, "Can you describe how they performed when managing irrigation systems?" or "How did they handle equipment maintenance in the field?" These types of questions will give you a better understanding of how the candidate performs in agricultural environments.
- **Ask Specific Questions:** Avoid general questions like "How did they do?" Instead, ask targeted questions related to agricultural tasks. For example:
  - "How did they handle crop inspections or pest control?"
  - "Were they reliable when operating farm machinery or handling livestock?"
  - "How did they perform in terms of safety and following agricultural protocols?"
- **Stay Job-Focused:** Only ask questions related to the candidate's ability to perform tasks specific to the agricultural role, such as equipment operation, farm management, or seasonal workload. Avoid questions unrelated to the job, such as those about the candidate's personal life, health, or personality.
- **Talk to Supervisors:** Whenever possible, contact former supervisors who have worked with the candidate in an agricultural setting. Supervisors are often the best source of reliable information regarding a candidate's job performance in a farm or agricultural business. Let referees know the information they provide will remain confidential and, when possible, speak to more than one reference.
- **Keep a Record:** Document the information gathered during reference checks for future reference when making your hiring decision. This will help ensure that your decision is informed by a comprehensive understanding of the candidate's capabilities.
- **References from Other Countries:** With the increasing number of international applicants, it's acceptable to ask for references from the candidate's home country. Thanks to digital

communication tools like email or WhatsApp, contacting international references has become easier and more efficient.

- **Assure Confidentiality:** Many references may be reluctant to provide detailed feedback due to concerns about repercussions. Reassure them that the information will remain confidential. If they are still hesitant, try asking a more direct question like, "Would you rehire this person?" This can provide useful insight into the candidate's suitability for the role.
- **A Note on Human Rights and Reference Checks:** The same human rights rules that apply to interview questions apply to reference checks. You cannot ask a referee about a candidate's age, health, family status, religion, disability, or any other protected ground under the BC Human Rights Code — and you should not use that information in your hiring decision even if a referee volunteers it.

If a referee raises information unrelated to the candidate's job performance — for example, commenting on their health, personal circumstances, or family situation — redirect the conversation. A simple response such as "Thank you, I want to make sure I am staying focused on their work performance — can you tell me more about how they handled [specific task or situation]?" keeps the reference on track and protects you from inadvertently collecting information that could compromise your hiring decision.

If a referee volunteers protected information and you proceed to not hire the candidate, you are exposed to a human rights complaint even if the information played no role in your decision. The safest approach is to redirect immediately and make no note of what was said.

For further guidance, refer to the [Reference Check Template](#) or reach out to your HR Consultant.

## References

Job Description Template. (n.d.). Go2HR. Retrieved April 2026, from <https://www.go2hr.ca/explore-all-resources/human-resources/job-description-template>

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