

Economic Development Officer interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for economic development officer roles typically assess your ability to analyse economic data, engage with stakeholders, and translate strategy into action. You will likely face a panel that includes council or agency representatives and may be asked to present a short case study or respond to scenario-based questions.

- **Process:** Questions that ask you to walk through how you would approach a task, such as developing an economic strategy or managing a grant program.
- **Behavioural:** Questions that ask for examples from your past experience, focusing on stakeholder management, project delivery, and problem solving.
- **Scenario:** Questions that present a realistic challenge, such as a business facing planning hurdles or a community opposing a development, and ask how you would respond.
- **Technical:** Questions that probe your data analysis skills, understanding of policy frameworks, and familiarity with tools like Excel, GIS, or CRM systems.
- **Client-facing:** Questions that assess how you present information to council, boards, or business stakeholders, including your written and verbal communication.

The interview often begins with introductions and an overview of the role. You may be asked to complete a presentation or written exercise beforehand. The panel then moves through a mix of behavioural and scenario questions, with time for your questions at the end. Some councils include a separate meeting with key stakeholders or a site visit.

1. Walk me through how you would develop an economic development strategy for a region.

Why they ask

This assesses your ability to structure a complex project and apply economic development principles.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: start with research and data gathering, then stakeholder consultation, analysis, drafting, and presentation.

Example answer

"First, I would research the region's economic base, labour market, and industry trends using data from sources like the ABS and state agencies. I would then meet with local business owners, industry groups, and community representatives to understand their challenges and opportunities. Next, I would identify priority sectors and develop draft goals and actions. I would consult broadly on the draft, refine it based on feedback, and present the final strategy to council for endorsement. Throughout, I would ensure alignment with state and federal priorities."

2. Tell me about a time you managed a project that required coordination across multiple stakeholders.

Why they ask

This explores your project management and stakeholder engagement skills in a real situation.

How to structure your answer

Use the STAR method: describe the Situation, Task, Action, and Result.

Example answer

"In a previous role, I managed a business support grant program that involved coordinating with council finance, legal, and communications teams, as well as external business advisors. The task was to launch the program and support local businesses through the application process. I set up a project plan, held regular meetings, and developed clear guidelines. As a result, we received a strong uptake from local businesses, and several used the grants to expand and create jobs. The program was delivered on time and within budget."

3. A local business wants to expand but faces planning hurdles. How would you handle it?

Why they ask

This tests your problem-solving and ability to navigate regulatory processes while supporting business growth.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement-under-pressure structure: assess the situation, gather information, identify options, engage stakeholders, and propose a solution.

Example answer

"I would first meet with the business owner to understand the specific planning issues and their expansion plans. Then I would review the relevant planning scheme and consult with council planning staff to clarify constraints. I would explore options such as a planning amendment, a different site, or staging the expansion. I would facilitate a meeting between the business and planning officers to find a workable solution. If needed, I would present a case to council for a variation, balancing the economic benefits with planning requirements."

4. How do you use data analysis to inform economic development decisions?

Why they ask

This assesses your technical skills and ability to translate data into actionable insights.

How to structure your answer

Explain your approach: identify data sources, use tools like Excel or GIS, analyse trends, and translate into recommendations.

Example answer

"I start by identifying relevant data sources, such as ABS census data, business counts, and industry reports. I use Excel to analyse trends in employment, investment, and business growth, and GIS to map spatial patterns like industry clusters. I also use survey tools to gather local business feedback. I then synthesise this into clear findings and recommendations, such as targeting a particular sector for support or identifying infrastructure gaps. I always ensure the analysis is accessible to non-technical audiences."

5. How would you present a complex economic development proposal to a council or board?

Why they ask

This evaluates your written and verbal communication skills and your ability to influence decision-makers.

How to structure your answer

Outline a presentation structure: context, problem, data, options, recommendation, and benefits.

Example answer

"I would structure the presentation starting with the context and the economic challenge or opportunity. Then I would present the data and analysis in a clear, visual way, such as charts or maps. I would outline the options considered and their pros and cons. I would make a clear

recommendation with supporting evidence, and explain the expected benefits for jobs and investment. I would keep it concise, avoid jargon, and allow time for questions. I would also provide a written report for detailed reference."