

JOB DESCRIPTIONS – HOW TO PREPARE AND CHANGE

The Personnel Department is responsible for the final job description, approval by the bargaining unit and submission to the Board for approval. Principals and program managers play an active role in the process. The process below outlines the process of job description development and/or revision so administrators may understand and assist in the process.

Job descriptions are written statements of the major responsibilities and duties performed by incumbents in a type of position. They should contain information regarding the knowledge, abilities, education and experience required to perform the job as well as certain information about the physical conditions in which the work is performed and the intensity, frequency and duration of the physical and mental effort required. Job descriptions are used to:

1. Ensure that employees are assigned to the correct classification (position title).
2. Evaluate jobs and determine pay grade assignments.
3. Ensure accurate job-to-job comparisons.
4. Explain and defend certain salary decisions to employees and outsiders.

Writing Job Descriptions: General Recommendations

The key elements in a description are the nature and level of the work. In addition to representative duties, the description must include the knowledge and abilities required by the job, the distinguishing characteristics, level of responsibility and the working conditions. The descriptions should describe jobs as they exist now, not as they will exist sometime in the future. Frequently, planned changes in jobs do not occur when they are expected to occur. It is wise to wait until changes occur to re-write the job description.

Positions may be occupied by more than one person. There may be some differences in the way individuals perform the work or in an area of emphasis within the normal functions of the position; however, that does not necessarily mean that you have two separate positions. Minor differences in the way work is performed are attributable to individuals and should be ignored. The area of emphasis may be related to the function of the area of assignment such as in a clerk in the main office area compared to a clerk in the counseling office. The position will require only one description if the representative duties and basic overall functions are the same.

Writing Sentences for Job Descriptions

The emphasis in the writing of job descriptions should always be on brevity and clarity. The sentence structure should be verb/object/explanatory phrase. The implied subject of such sentences is always the person occupying the job. For instance, "Transports mail to various locations throughout the facility." Explanatory phrases tell why, how, where, or how often the tasks or duties are performed. They add meaning and are important. The telegraphic style is used, omitting unnecessary articles and verbs. The present tense should be used throughout the description.

To enhance clarity, words which are subject to varying interpretations should be avoided, for example, "some," "great," and "occasionally." The use of examples enhances the clarity of descriptions and is recommended when a need for clarification exists.

Proprietary names (IBM, Jeep, and Xerox) as well as references to organizationally specific form numbers should be avoided. These are subject to frequent change and their inclusion will necessitate the frequent rewriting of descriptions. Avoid terminology that is potentially sexist. Use he/she, or construct sentences so that gender pronouns are not required.

Format for Job Descriptions

A job description should include the following:

Title	Reports To
Department	Classification (Classified or Certificated)
Work Year	Salary
Board Approval	Distinguishing Characteristics
Basic Function	Education and Experience
Essential Job Functions	Working Conditions (Environment & Physical Abilities)
Knowledge and Abilities	

Title

The title should describe the nature and level of work performed. Titles such as: "clerk," "analyst" and "mechanic" indicate the type of representative duties. Another component of the title such as "senior" or "specialist" indicates the level. Care should be taken to avoid titles which are demeaning or patronizing such as "junior" or which overstate the importance of the work such as "sanitary engineer" for custodian. Avoid sexist titles such as "deliveryman."

Also listed in the title block, is the work year length, salary range, classification, work hours, department and the position title of the person to whom the employee reports. Ranges may be used for areas like work hours and salary ranges.

Basic Function

The basic function should include the general nature, level and purpose of the job. The summary should be brief and orient the reader to the remaining parts of the description. If this is a stand-alone position, include information regarding the responsibility level by indicating the freedom to act, e.g., "works independently" or "works under close supervision."

Distinguishing Characteristics

This section should include information regarding positions with the same title, but at different levels, i.e., Office Manager I, Office Manager II, Office Manager III, etc. The level of responsibility and the difficulty of work being performed should be included. Indicate the different levels through the use of appropriate modifying words or phrases, sometimes referred to as "level cutters." For example, in a position with three levels, each level may be characterized respectively as "basic," "routine" or "high." A range of level cutters, associated with commonly used modifiers, is shown on the table included in this section.

Essential Job Functions

Each duty which occupies more than 5% of the incumbent's time and which is critical to the successful performance of the job should be included in this section. They should be arranged in a logical order. The order may be the sequence in which duties are performed, or the duties may be arranged in order of importance or in order of time that incumbents devote to them. Give an indication of the extent to which the employee must exercise judgment; the intensity, frequency and duration of the levels of physical and mental effort required; the types of contacts required; the complexity of the work and analytical skills required; the materials and equipment worked with; and the incumbents' responsibility for the work of other employees or the development or enforcement of policies and procedures.

Disclaimer Clause

Job descriptions are not intended to be exhaustive lists of all responsibilities, skills, efforts, or working conditions. They are intended to be accurate reflections of the principal job elements essential for making fair pay decisions about jobs. All job descriptions should contain this statement: "Perform other related duties as assigned."

Education and Experience

This section should include the educational requirements for the position and the number of years and types of experience required. A minimum of a high school diploma or equivalent is required. A combination of education and experience may be used as well. A preference for a level of education and/or experience above the minimum may be listed.

Knowledge and Abilities

The "Knowledge" and "Abilities" sections should be listed separately. The specific knowledge and abilities required for the position should be included. Begin with a statement of the level of general educational development required, e.g., "work requires the use of decimals, fractions and percentages" or "the ability to understand complicated verbal instructions." The knowledge and abilities should be stated and interpreted as minimums and should be realistic. If requirements are inflated, they will screen out people who are qualified and make recruiting efforts more difficult. This section should also list any special interpersonal or analytical skills required by the job.

Working Conditions

The working conditions should include the "Environment" and "Physical Abilities" required in the job. List the conditions in the physical environment that the employee may find unpleasant or hazardous. The degree, intensity, frequency and duration of such conditions are important. State precisely the working conditions that are unpleasant or dangerous, how unpleasant or dangerous they are and how frequently an incumbent would be exposed to the conditions and for how long. Examples may include: office environment, works outdoors in all weather conditions for extended periods, exposed to frequent interruptions and exposed to hazardous chemicals.

The "Physical Abilities" section would include any special physical or mental abilities required for the job. Again, be as specific as possible and indicate the intensity, frequency and duration, for example: "work requires the ability to walk and stand for approximately one-half of the work time," or "the physical ability necessary to carry boxes weighing twenty or thirty pounds each from 10% to 15% of work time," or "the mental and visual ability to read and interpret the most complex circuitry blueprints approximately 10% of work time," or "stand in one area for 30% of work time," or "sit and use a computer terminal for 65% of the work day."

EXAMPLES OF MODIFYING WORDS OR PHRASES (Level Cutters)

Factor	Lowest Level to Highest Level
Problem Complexity	Limited Complexity Moderate Complexity Unusual Complexity Extremely Complex, Requiring Highly Creative Solutions
Interpersonal Skills	Normal Courtesy Explain or Instruct Persuades Negotiates
Independent Judgment	Rarely Required Often Required Frequently Required Works Independently
Hazards	Low Hazard Exposure to Minor Discomfort, Injury, or Illness Exposure to Major Injury or Illness Exposure to Life Threatening Situations Note: There is no such thing as a "hazard free" environment.