

Guide to Writing a Position Description

WHAT IS A POSITION DESCRIPTION?

A formalized statement of duties and responsibilities.

Purpose

- to identify the position
- to define its scope and content

Includes:

- Equipment used
- Persons or units supervised
- Work unit
- Physical location
- Minimum qualifications as recommended by management

WHY ARE POSITION DESCRIPTIONS IMPORTANT?

- Helps applicant, employee, supervisor, and human resources staff at every stage of employment,
- From recruitment to retirement
- Provide a sense of where the position fits into the organization
- Establish performance expectations for work planning and performance review process
- Help incumbent understand duties and responsibilities
- Provide information about knowledge, training, education, and skills needed for position
- Prevent misunderstanding by telling employees what they need to know about their positions
- Clarify who is responsible for what within organization
- Help management analyze and improve organizational structure
- Provide a basis for position evaluation, wage/surveys, and an equitable wage/salary structure

To summarize, position descriptions impact every component of human resource management including recruitment, training, performance management, organizational design, classification and compensation.

WHO WRITES THE POSITION DESCRIPTION?

- Completed by employee in conjunction with supervisor
- Completed by supervisor for vacant positions
- Employee, immediate supervisor, and section/division manager must sign, certifying that
it is complete and accurate

POSITION DESCRIPTION FORMS

PD102R-92 Examples:

Administrative Assistant
Business Officer
Health Care Technician
Housekeeper
Human Services
Physician
Program Administrator
Program Consultant
Program Manager
Personnel Technician
Nurse
Social Worker

PD OSS-93 Office Support Services Form Examples:

Administrative Secretary
Administrative Services Assistant
Executive Assistant
Information Processing Technician
Office Assistant
Personnel Assistant
Processing Assistant
Program Assistant

Career Banding Job Description Form Examples:

Business & Technology Applications
Information Technology
Networking
Operations and Systems
Public Safety
Social/Clinical Research
Technology Support

Four-Step Method to developing Position Description content:

1. Collect background information: Program data, current procedural standards or guides, existing work plans, written instructions, etc. which are relevant to position.
2. Project organizational reporting lines: Review structure & determine how any changes may have affected position.
3. List major functions & responsibilities: This is the framework of the position description. Accountability for procedures, solutions, programs, services, and decisions.
4. Identify specific duties/tasks necessary to carry out the functions and responsibilities of the position. This can simplify the entire process of writing job descriptions. Task can be defined as an action to accomplish an objective of the position.

CHECKLIST FOR WRITING A POSITION DESCRIPTION

The following may be helpful to ensure that all items are included in the position description.

1. Has the proper form been used? (e.g., PD OSS-93, PD 102R-92, career banding)
2. Is a brief statement provided to describe the purpose of the organizational unit?
3. Is a brief introductory statement given to explain the primary purpose of the job?
4. Have changes occurred in the position's primary duties in the last year and have these Changes been sufficiently documented?
5. Are percentages shown and do they total 100%?
6. Is each major function described?
7. Are examples of work used to explain functions?
8. Are any specialized terms or acronyms used that will tend to confuse the reader? If so, be sure they are explained.
9. Is the description too long? Be sure to eliminate:
 - (a) any discussion of personal education and experience;
 - (b) any discussion of work not done personally (e.g., work by other employees in the unit);
 - (c) any repetition of material.
10. Is there any overlap between this description and other descriptions in your unit? If so, eliminate the overlap or explain it in the description.
11. Is the form signed and dated by the employee and supervisor?
12. Does the organizational chart accurately reflect the unit's current structure?

