

GUIDE ON JOB DESCRIPTIONS



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PART I: INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

- A.1. The Guide on Job Description (Guide) aims to advise departments about the compilation and utilisation of job descriptions in accordance with their needs and circumstances. Although the Guide itself is advisory, the new Public Service Regulations(PSR)III.I.1 prescribe that departments must compile job descriptions for each post and/or group of posts.
- A.2. The intention is that the Guide should be as useful, relevant and user-friendly as possible. Any feedback, including examples of best practice, would be appreciated in order to update and improve it periodically. Inputs should be submitted to the Department of Public Service and Administration.

B. APPROACH FOLLOWED BY THE GUIDE

- B.1 The Guide takes into account the requirements of PSR III.I.1 that job descriptions should be based on the main objectives of jobs, should indicate the inherent requirements of jobs, and reflect an appropriate emphasis on service delivery. Certain information about career pathing is also required.
- B.2 Furthermore, the specific model which has been developed to assist departments and which is discussed in Part II of the Guide, takes into consideration the needs of the EQUATE job evaluation system which is prescribed for the public service, as well as the requirements set out with regard to service delivery, performance management and various human resource management practices. The latter are indicated in the Batho Pele White Paper and the White Papers on Human Resource Management and Public Service Education and Training respectively.
- B.3 With the phasing out of the Personnel Administration Standard (PAS) system and the introduction of the Codes of Remuneration (CORE) the need for job description as an integral part of work organisation and job design should become more apparent in practice. The impact of the CORE on work organisation is that a much more flexible approach can be adopted towards job design which may cut across the narrow and rigid definitions of work previously prescribed in the PAS. Multi-tasking, as well as the merging of job responsibilities to promote service delivery, will also be possible with the implementation of the new regulatory framework.
- B.4 Whereas job descriptions have traditionally focussed on the job content of posts, the suggested model focuses on the objectives as well as the job outputs and competencies (skills, knowledge) which are required to perform them successfully at the various post levels. By linking output (job specification) with competency (person specification) job descriptions can serve as an important source of job information as well as a strategic management tool within an organisation.

C. RATIONALE FOR JOB DESCRIPTIONS

- C.1 Public Service Regulations III.1.1 prescribe that all departments must compile job descriptions and job titles for each post and/or group of posts. As a multipurpose source of job information, job descriptions and job titles should be completed to assist job evaluation as well as the advertising and filling of posts.
- C.2 The regulations require job descriptions essentially -
- to encourage managers and employees to develop a more consistent understanding of the responsibilities attached to a post.
 - to ensure that all employees have a defined career path, and
 - to encourage departments to review employees' responsibilities to ensure that they align with departmental objectives.
- C.3 But job descriptions may lead to excessive rigidity, so that employees refuse all tasks not included in their job description. For this reason, departments must ensure that job descriptions explicitly permit related tasks, even if they are not specified, and avoid excessive detail.

D. AMENDMENT OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND JOB TITLES

Job descriptions and titles may have a substantial impact on conditions of service and negotiations.

- To institute a new job title and description, a department may explicitly de-link a job from the former PAS. The department will then have to negotiate a new employment contract with the employee, which could affect grading and eligibility for rank or leg promotions. This approach is advisable only where a department is designing a fairly unique job. It does not make sense where employees form part of large national cohorts subject to sectoral bargaining, for instance, health personnel or where a law requires a particular title, for instance, for district surgeons.
- A department may explicitly maintain the link between a job and the former PAS, which will mean that no change occurs in the employee's conditions of service even if the job description or title is modified.

PART II: SUGGESTED JOB DESCRIPTION MODEL

A job description model has been developed to assist departments in developing their own models. Depending on their individual needs and circumstances departments may need to manage and structure their job descriptions differently. The suggested model does however take into account the requirements of the PSR as well as relevant human resource practices requirements and should therefore serve as a useful guide. It consists of the following components:

A. JOB INFORMATION SUMMARY

A.1 A summary of job details provides a useful and short source of job information which can assist organisation planning and related processes. It should include the following:

A.1.1 Name of the current postholder

A.1.2 Job title/job category title - depending on whether an individual post or group of posts is being described. Departments and provincial administrations must determine job titles based on the main objectives of posts in terms of PSR III.I.I and the Occupational Classification System;

A.1.3 CORE - the CORE applicable to the occupational category in respect of which the post(s) has/ have been created;

A.1.4 Grade and the salary attached to the post - as determined by means of the job evaluation system in conjunction with the applicable CORE;

A.1.5 The name of the component in which the post(s) is/ are located;

A.1.6 Organisational placement (a simplified organogram could be attached) - the position of the post in the organisation structure also indicating the next higher post the incumbent reports to for organisation purposes as well as direct subordinates;

A.1.7 Location (the name of the city/town in which the post(s) is/are located);

A.1.8 The date on which the job description is completed/reviewed.

B. JOB PURPOSE (Reason why post was created)

The job purpose is an accurate, short statement about the post's or post category's overall purpose or reason for existence in a department. It also serves to give some indication about how a job can be linked to the organisational mission and objectives. Details about how the job purpose will be achieved should not be included. (This part relates closely to the main objectives discussed below and it can be considered not to indicate it separately but to integrate it as part of the main

objectives).

Examples:

ELEMENTARY JOB (FARM AID I)	COMPLEX JOB (SENIOR HR PRACTITIONER)
Support agricultural research that aims to identify and register new plant varieties.	Give direction to and co-ordinate the development and application of human resource policies in the department.

C. MAIN OBJECTIVES (Goals to be achieved)

- C.1 Traditionally, job descriptions gave lists of duties, tasks or activities. The regulations indicate a shift to describing the objectives of the job. Instead of trying to control the work process, supervisors can then assess outputs. This approach seeks to give employees greater freedom to define the most efficient, effective and meaningful way of doing their work.
- C.2 A job description should list five or six main objectives, which are goals that must be achieved to fulfil the overall purpose of the job. As far as possible, it should state objectives in terms of measurable results and rank them in order of importance. It should not include details about how a job should be done.
- C.3 The main objectives of a post should be worded in such a way that the level of work which is being performed by the incumbent of a specific post can be clearly identified. Management and supervisory responsibilities should also be reflected.

Examples:

ELEMENTARY JOB (FARM AID I)	COMPLEX JOB (SENIOR HR PRACTITIONER)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clearly demarcated and well-prepared land. 2. Well planted and irrigated crops. 3. Properly recorded research data. 4. Well fertilised and weeded land. 5. Properly harvested crops. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A relevant and updated action plan for the development of departmental HRM policies. 2. Policy inputs reviewed and analysed in accordance with the action plan. 3. Co-ordination and collaboration throughout the Department in developing HRM policies according to the timetable in the action plan. 4. Correct application of HRM policies through support and monitoring in accordance with the action plan. 5. A stronger HRM capacity thanks to the provision of information, guidance, assistance and training to HRM component, line managers and others.

D. INHERENT REQUIREMENTS OF THE JOB (Competency profile)

- D.1 The inherent requirements of a job refer to the competencies that, according to

evidence, an employee needs in order to carry out a job. Competencies refer to the blend of knowledge, skills, aptitude, etc. that a person can apply in the work environment, which indicates a person's ability to meet the requirements of a specific post. For instance, previously it was required from a typist to have typing as a fully passed subject on matric level. However, in terms of the revised dispensation it is no longer the only criteria that could be used to determine the suitability of a candidate. A person's ability to type at the required speed and quality on a certain word processing package can be tested by means of a departmental typing test.

The CORE to which the relevant post is linked can assist in identifying appropriate job outputs, competencies and learning indicators at different grades. Job descriptions should not give more than five or six core competencies.

Defining indicators of competencies proves particularly important for recruitment and promotion. As far as possible, indicators should include indicators in addition to formal qualifications, which tend to incorporate a bias against groups historically excluded from formal education.

In defining inherent requirements of a job, managers must avoid discriminatory criteria as far as possible. For instance, requiring a particular height might discriminate against women; insisting on a university education, without accepting alternative indicators of competencies such as experience, automatically limits the pool of black applicants.

ELEMENTARY JOB (FARM AID I)		COMPLEX JOB (SENIOR HR PRACTITIONER)	
KEY COMPETENCIES	LEARNING FIELD AND INDICATORS	KEY COMPETENCIES	LEARNING FIELD AND INDICATORS
1. Sowing and harvesting crops to promote good farming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In-service training in farming practices ➤ Relevant experience 	1. Knowledge/skills in some combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Organisational development ➤ Job evaluation ➤ Labour Relations ➤ Compensation Management ➤ Human Resource Development ➤ Human Resource Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Appropriate tertiary qualification in HR/Organisation Development or Labour Relations fields. ➤ Informal training in HRM and related fields such as courses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resource Development • Human Resource Planning • Organisational development • Job evaluation • Labour Relations • Remuneration policies, etc. • Practical in-service training ➤ Relevant experience.
2. Applying insecticides and fertilisers as well as irrigation system.	Training in the application of insecticides. Experience in irrigation.	2. The ability to interpret and apply policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Appropriate qualifications. ➤ Appropriate experience.

ELEMENTARY JOB (FARM AID I)		COMPLEX JOB (SENIOR HR PRACTITIONER)	
KEY COMPETENCIES	LEARNING FIELD AND INDICATORS	KEY COMPETENCIES	LEARNING FIELD AND INDICATORS
3. Knowledge of required safety standards.	Basic training in NOSA safety standards.	3. Ability to research HRM policy and standards in order to give advice and develop policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Appropriate training in research methodology. ➤ Experience in research.
4. Utilising and maintaining farming equipment.	On the job training and/or experience.	4. The ability to formulate sound policies through analytical and innovative thinking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Appropriate training. ➤ Experience in policy development.
5. Fire fighting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Basic fire fighting course. ➤ Relevant experience. 	5. Good written and verbal communication skills and ability to facilitate workshops and present policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Relevant tertiary qualifications. ➤ Training in presentation. ➤ Training in facilitation. ➤ Relevant experience in presentation and facilitation.
6. Ability to record research data to ensure effective farming practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ABET. ➤ Training in completing research questionnaires. ➤ Relevant experience. 		

E. CAREER PATHING

E.1 The White Paper on Human Resource Management indicates that primary responsibility for career management rests with the employee. Departments however, also have a responsibility for career management. The employee's immediate supervisor should keep up to date with job, training and development opportunities. Job descriptions can assist by providing relevant information, particularly about competencies, promotion and salary range progression.

Promotion to the next higher post

E.2 PSR III.I.1(c) requires that in each job description the nature of the post(s) in the next level of the career path as provided for in the relevant occupational category, including the necessary post promotion requirements must be indicated. Such information could be provided in summary form.

Progression to the next higher salary range

E.3 Furthermore, PSR V.D.2(a) indicates that an employee shall be eligible for salary range progression only if her or his job description defines a career path that spans more than 1 salary range in the salary scale. The job description should therefore indicate the span of salary range progression applicable to the post, if relevant. The nature of the work required at the next higher level must then also be indicated. It should be noted that in terms of PSR V.D.2 various other criteria should also be complied with by the employee in order to progress to a higher salary range.

Examples:

ELEMENTARY JOB (FARM AID I)	COMPLEX JOB (SNR HR PRACTITIONER)
<p>1. Next higher post. Farm Aid II.</p> <p>2. Nature of work. Responsible for more complicated tasks in production and harvesting of crops. Allocate labour specific tasks. Keep logbooks, time-tables and attendance registers. Assist with the ordering of seeds, herbicides and insecticides. Collate research data.</p> <p>3. Requirements: Three years' service plus good performance in current position; adequate literacy and numeracy and basic managerial skills.</p>	<p>1. Next higher post. Assistant Director: HRM.</p> <p>2. Nature of work at the next higher post. Manage the development and maintenance of HRM policies in the Department. Consult and negotiate with stakeholders on the HRM policies to ensure optimal co-ordination and collaboration. Provide training to HRM practitioners. Responsible for performance management of all subordinates. Overall supervision, planning and co-ordination of section.</p> <p>3. Requirements: Evidence of competency (substantial relevant experience, preferably with a relevant tertiary qualification) in both HR policy development and implementation and in management of personnel and finance; excellent performance in current position.</p> <p>4. Promotion is possible only through competition for a vacant position.</p>

F. JOB DESCRIPTION AGREEMENT

It is important that employees understand what is expected of them and that they concur with it. It is therefore regarded as essential to conclude a job description with an agreement between the relevant incumbent and the supervisor of such a person. This section can simply indicate that the incumbent concurs with the job description and should be signed and dated by both the incumbent and the supervisor.

PART III: MANAGING JOB DESCRIPTIONS IN A DEPARTMENT

A. PRACTICAL ADVICE AND BEST PRACTICES

A.1 Keeping job descriptions appropriate and up to date

PSR III.1.2 require that job descriptions must remain appropriate and accurate and that they must be reviewed at least every three years. If there is a need to review job descriptions more regularly, departments are encouraged to do so. As stated in the introduction of the Guide, job description should be regarded as an integral part of work organisation and job design, and should therefore be kept up to date.

A.2 Utilisation of line supervisors

Instead of compiling job descriptions centrally in a department, training and advice could be provided to line supervisors who would then be responsible for developing job descriptions within their own components. However, a supervisor may very well not have a detailed knowledge on how to determine the responsibilities, duties and requirements of the jobs of their subordinates. They would then need to be assisted by human resource or other practitioners.

A.3 Use of language

The language used in job descriptions should be clearly understandable to the supervisor, subordinates and other stakeholders to avoid uncertainty. It may also be useful to try to standardise on terminology in respect of competencies to promote a common approach and understanding about job requirements in a department. Indiscriminate use of language could erode the usefulness and value of job descriptions.

A.4 Individual versus category job descriptions

It may be helpful to standardise on job descriptions in respect of related categories of work on the same work level. Highly specialised and specific jobs are more likely to require individual output and competency descriptions.

A.5 Flexible job description formats

Instead of using the same job description format for all jobs, it may be more feasible and appropriate to develop different formats according to the nature of the jobs being described. Depending on the level and complexity of a job, more or fewer elements of description could be included in the format.

The inclusion of service delivery and the performance standards will depend on the

capacity of the supervisor in formulating it as well as the nature of the job. In considering service delivery and performance standards the following should be indicated:

- * how the job can contribute to a service delivery programme, for instance, by including customer requirements; and
- * performance standards which will promote accountability and work performance by reflecting the standards of service delivery required.