**Guidelines for writing job descriptions**

**(May 2010)**

**Definitions**

A job description may be defined as:

“*A formalized statement of the major function, duties and responsibilities, organizational relationships and qualifications required for a specific job*.”

A job description is a guide to the critical duties and essential functions of the job, not an all-inclusive list of all responsibilities, qualifications, physical demands and work environment conditions. The job description may focus on the outcomes required from a position which allows for alternate means of performing the duties in response to changes in technology, employee preferences or disability accommodations.

**Major uses**

The job description can be used to evaluate job content in terms of nature, purpose and organizational level. It can be used to make accurate pay comparisons with other organizations and to control job classifications and job title usage. It can serve as a communication tool to assist in establishing job goals and performance measurement criteria.

**Template Overview**

1. The first section of the job description contains the identifying information such as job title, department and reporting relationship.
2. Next, a brief statement of purpose is provided, which should answer the question “*why*” the job exists.
3. A more comprehensive description of the primary responsibilities follows; these responsibilities should answer the question of “*what*” is done to fulfill the major purpose, not necessarily “*how*” it is done. Organize duties and responsibilities in a logical order, grouped by function, with the most important listed first. Start each sentence with a precise verb that describes a specific action. The secondary responsibilities are those tasks that are undertaken less frequently and that are not essential to the successful performance of the job.
4. A description of the internal and external relationships follows in the next section. It is important to capture both the type of contacts and their nature. For example, a receptionist may have contacts with high level individuals but the purpose of the contact may be solely to greet.
5. A statement of supervisory responsibilities is needed to assist in determining the job level. Is the position held as an administrator or specialist, or as a manager? How many individuals and what titles are supervised? Does the individual oversee the activities of consultants or vendors? Does the position occasionally instruct or assist others?
6. The next section addresses the skills and knowledge needed to perform the job responsibilities. It should be a statement of the education and experience needed to perform satisfactorily, rather than what the individual in the position may possess.
7. The final section addresses working conditions and should contain job-related requirements that affect the performance of the duties of the position such as travel requirements, physical demands and other factors beyond those found in a day-to-day office environment. Information gathered in this section is designed to assist in considerations of hiring requirements and ADA “reasonable accommodations”
8. Finally, the job description should be signed by the incumbent, and by the direct supervisor.