

POSITION DESCRIPTION GUIDANCE

December 2011

General Information and Purpose

The Position Description (PD) is the state's official job description and legal document that describes the duties and responsibilities of an individual position or job in the state personnel system, which are also the expectations of the job. The PD is the primary data collection instrument designed to gather information about the specific assignment and characteristics of a single position relative to the job evaluation system's three primary factors: Decision Making, Complexity, and Line/Staff Authority. Because the PD is the official record of the position's assignment, it is the basis of job evaluation decisions and documents information used for purposes of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAA), Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), employee selection, performance management and development, and workforce and staffing planning. **Every position in the state personnel system must have an official and accurate PD on file.**

The PD is evaluated to determine the proper class for new, vacant, and filled positions. Although employees and supervisors are encouraged to work collaboratively to complete the PD, the supervisor and appointing authority are ultimately accountable for establishing the work assignment, as well as the completeness and accuracy of information within the PD.

This guide is intended to provide general information and assistance in completion of the PD. Examples have been selected from a wide variety of jobs, at varying levels; are not presented in any hierarchical order; and are not indicative of a particular level or class of work.

When to Write or Update a PD

- When an appointing authority creates a new position.
- When an appointing authority is filling a vacant position that has changed in duties or responsibilities.
- When permanent and substantial changes have been made to the duties and responsibilities of a filled position.
- When department practice dictates. For example, some departments require an annual review of PD's, sometimes as part of annual performance planning. This is recommended practice that will help ensure current and accurate PD's.

General Guidelines to Writing and Updating a PD

- The PD is written based on the current job duties and responsibilities, *NOT* on an employee's knowledge, skills, or abilities and *NOT* on duties that may be assigned in the future or were assigned in the past.
- The PD should have a realistic portrayal of the job as a whole, so that anyone reading the PD has a clear understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the position.
- Examples should be clear and concise statements that provide a thorough and representative description of the work assignment.
- The accuracy of job duties and content within the PD is the responsibility of the position's appointing authority. If a dispute over the PD arises, the appointing authority's decision is final.

Who Should Write or Update the PD

- The appointing authority should prepare the PD for a vacant position or to create a new position.
- For filled positions, the employee in that position is a great resource to identify the assigned duties performed and often prepares the initial draft. However, the appointing authority may write or update a PD for any position in the work unit or may change a PD drafted by an employee, as the appointing authority has the ultimate authority to define the job.

Individuals completing the PD may wish to contact their department's Human Resources Office for any, all, or a combination of the following:

- if the job description is being completed for the first time;
- for clarification of the job evaluation factors and classes;
- for designation of essential functions for purposes of ADAA and FMLA;
- for additional information regarding reasonable accommodations or for guidance with respect to the ADAA;
- for assistance in describing Line/Staff Authority (particularly for staff/senior authority positions), and completing the Conditions of Employment section; and
- for department specific formats (other than the PD) for documenting information, PD availability in other software packages or electronic forms, and/or guidelines regarding which level of management should sign the PD as the "Approving/Reviewing Official."

The PD is designed with three primary segments; the part to be completed by the supervisor and employee, where applicable (sections I – IV), the part to be completed by the appointing authority (sections V and VI), and the part for human resources to complete (pages 7 and 8). Each of the following sections parallels the appropriate section of the PD. Generally, the document should be typed, but handwritten PD's are acceptable, if legible.

I. **Position Identification**

The agency code is the three character code used by COFRS. For example, The Department of Revenue is TAA. If appropriate, provide the position's working title. A working title that differs from the official class title is a common, accepted practice.

II. **General Information**

This section provides information about the nature of the position and the work setting, and should illustrate how the position fits into the organization. Coupled with the Job Description Section, this information should give an overall picture of the job.

To describe the purpose of the *work unit*, complete the sentence, "This work unit exists to..." This completed statement should illustrate the function of the work unit.

To summarize the purpose of the *position*, complete the sentence, "The position exists to..." This completed statement should illustrate the primary reason the position exists in relation to the function of the work unit.

The remaining questions address the extent of the changes in assignment since the previous PD, and any impact these changes may have on other positions in the unit and/or organization.

As requested in the PD, a current **organizational chart** is required to document the reporting relationships, class titles, position numbers and FTE of the regular staffing pattern.

III. **Primary Job Duties**

Information in this section should provide thorough and concise documentation regarding the scope of what the position does and how. For each Duty listed in this section there are three areas that require information; the duty description, examples of decisions, and typical challenges and guidance used in resolution of problems.

Duty Descriptions

Duty descriptions should focus on primary, current, regular duties and responsibilities of the position (not incidental duties, an employee's qualifications or performance, or temporary assignments). Related or similar duties should be combined and written as one statement.

Each statement should be a discreet, identifiable aspect of the work assignment and should be outcome-based, allowing for alternate means of performing the duty, changes in technology, preferences of employees and supervisors, and accommodations of workers with disabilities, without altering the nature, or the duty itself.

Duty descriptions should be brief, clear, concise, and described using present tense action verbs. Related or similar duties should be combined and written as one statement. Abbreviations, acronyms and specialized terms should be avoided (or explained).

Examples

Designs and implements databases by evaluating documentation requirements and using software packages to create tables, queries, reports, macros and applications to compile and run reports.

Inspects site conditions and scientifically analyzes environmental test data to assess pollutant levels. Identifies necessary remediation measures and standards.

Documents eligibility status by reviewing information and evaluating where individuals meet program requirements.

Inspects and fills soap dispensers in restrooms.

Supervises reception office with two employees, including assigning job duties, providing job training, scheduling work, and monitoring and evaluating performance.

Plans workshops, meetings and conferences by scheduling participants and presenters, arranging for production of materials, acquiring equipment, selecting facilities and service providers, and compiling evaluations to determine program effectiveness.

Decision Making Examples

The example(s) of decision making should illustrate, (1) the amount of authority required to use judgment and independence in making decisions regarding the performance of the duty description, and (2) the authority the position has to implement decisions regarding how the duty is performed or how work assignments are carried out. It is important that the decision-making examples agree with and relate to the corresponding duty description. Examples should describe typical, highest-level decisions which are made regularly and do not **require** pre-approval by the supervisor in order to be accomplished.

Examples

Develops and implements procedures for department's grant proposal process including establishing internal criteria for divisions to submit proposals; writing the grant funding manual; creating budget, request, evaluation and authorization forms; instructing other staff in processing steps; and establishing a tracking system (hard-copy and database) that cross-references information by division, funding source and data.

Determines most efficient formats, charts and tables for thorough and accurate reporting of information.

Determines availability of budget funds for expenditures based on current fund balance, upcoming fixed and other projected expenses.

Determines how to meet senior management objectives for department-wide initiatives through the design and delivery of training programs, recruitment and training of instructors, and scheduling of employees for certification classes.

Typical Challenges and Guidance

Examples of typical problems or challenges encountered by the position are evaluated based on the nature of judgment used relative to available guidelines when performing the corresponding job duty. The information presented in this statement should clarify the level of analysis and judgment that is expected of the position to perform assigned work. Overall, these statements should be consistent with the corresponding duty description and decision-making examples, so the reader will have a clear overview of the position as a whole. Examples should focus on typical situations and challenges faced by the position, not those which are unusual or unlikely to occur again.

Examples

In registering participants for conferences, position reviews registration forms and determines the appropriate fee to charge for requested accommodations.

In order to diagnose illnesses and develop client treatment plans, position considers and evaluates models of psychotherapy and behavioral theories as they relate to client histories and results of tests and observations.

In developing and delivering a project management training program, position considers the organizational circumstances, employee group(s) involved, and the specific training needs in order to determine the most appropriate training solution to a given situation. Position must rely on general principles, theories and models, or training needs assessment, and program evaluation to develop an appropriate approach.

Position reviews equipment requisitions, accounting and purchasing rules and guidelines, department procedures, and vendor files to determine which apply to the purchase of different types of heavy equipment, and selects the best procurement methods in each case.

In developing an employee selection examination plan, position considers the cost-benefit ratio in determining which type of test best assesses the skills and abilities critical to job performance.

In addition, please list all available guidance used by the position to resolve a problem.

Example

Colorado Constitution and statute, Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), federal regulations and administrative rulings, legislative intent, gubernatorial policy/direction and executive orders, personnel rules and procedures, case law, state fiscal and purchasing rules.

ADAAA Essential Function and Functional Attributes

In documenting essential functions, functional attributes may correlate with how the duty is currently being performed, but may not be applicable for all methods of performing the

duty. A person with a disability who is unable to perform a duty according to its current functional attributes should not be eliminated from consideration unless there are no effective alternate ways to perform the function, and there are no reasonable accommodations available to offset his/her functional limitations without posing an undue hardship on the employer. (A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to the work environment or to the manner or circumstances under which the essential function is customarily performed.) The functional attributes of the job duties are listed on the last page of the PD, and must be completed for each listed duty description.

IV. Line Authority

Line Authority is evaluated based on formal, direct control over the quantity and quality of work of subordinate employees (authority to affect pay, status and tenure in an employee-employer relationship). Any work lead or supervisory responsibilities should also be reflective in the organizational chart. If the position is a work leader or a supervisor, remember to include the total number of full time equivalent (FTE) positions and all position numbers of all subordinates.

V. Staff Authority (Staff/Senior/Leading)

This is the beginning of the appointing authority section of the PD. There are three levels of Authority, which are considered additional career options (also known as a dual career track) to line authority or supervisory assignments. An Authority designation shall not consider length of service, quality of performance, efficiency, personality, personal or unusual qualifications, pay issues or financial need, volume of work, or unusual diligence. Authority is based on a unique, expert level of authority and influence on the direction of policies or programs assigned by agency management. Staff authority is delegated by management, is an essential component of the job, and requires the position to advise and contribute authoritative information regarding an occupational field that results in expert recommendations impacting policy and programmatic decisions by management. Department management delegates this type of responsibility as a critical and ongoing part of the position assignment, which is verified and approved by the department human resource office. Staff, Senior, or Leading Authority concepts are not based on expertise as a reflection of longevity, an individual's experience or achievements, or being the most senior or only position in a unit that can accomplish related tasks or assignments. Their professional advice and recommendations are not questioned on technical merit but may not be implemented for budgetary or political reasons. These non-supervisory positions are generally viewed as equal value and impact to those with line authority, are evaluated based on management-delegated authority and unique expertise, and are rated at one of three conceptual levels defined below.

Staff Authority – (rare) influence is through direct impact within department boundaries (e.g., expert on the application of a system or program within in an agency). This authority crosses division lines and/or influences clients, like local governments.

Senior Authority – (very rare) influence is through direct impact beyond the boundaries of the immediate principal department or statewide (e.g., designer of a statewide program

or system, expert in a subject area for other departments in state government).

Leading Authority (extremely rare) - influence is through direct impact on the profession itself, beyond the boundaries of state government (e.g., recognized as a regional, national, or international expert).

The appointing authority need only complete this section if the position is a staff, senior, or leading authority. If applicable, the appointing authority must indicate the level of authority and provide as much detail as possible for the follow up questions. In addition, be sure to check with your human resource office to see if any other forms need completion, as some departments have an additional form or process for authority designation and approval.

VI. Conditions of Employment

Information in this section should be completed by the appointing authority and will be verified and approved by human resources before accepted as official. Also, it is recommended that appointing authorities obtain guidance from human resources while completing this section.

Special qualifications further define the standard minimum qualifications (MQ's) of the state job class (for example, a Spanish speaking requirement might be necessary, governmental accounting might be required for an accountant, etc.). Special entry requirements may not exceed (or be less than) the level or amount of education and/or experience required in the established MQ's for the class.

VII. Certification

The certification page makes the PD an official and legal document. Supervisors and appointing authorities should work closely with employees to make sure each position's PD is accurate and clearly understood by all parties involved. Employees should sign the certification section attesting to the fact they have read the PD and understand the content. Any disagreements on content or wording should be resolved before the document is submitted for human resource approval or allocation. The appointing authority has the ultimate legal obligation to assign duties and responsibilities to positions, although often shared with delegated supervisors, and is therefore accountable for assuring that the PD accurately describes the position. Once the appointing authority signs the form, it becomes the official position description for the position, even if the employee does not sign.