5. GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING
JOB DESCRIPTIONS
5. GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Introduction

1. This section provides information related to the preparation of job descriptions. It includes two job description formats approved and recommended by ICSC, suggestions for writing job descriptions and completing the questionnaires, as well as a glossary of terms used in job descriptions.

I. JOB DESCRIPTION FORMATS

2. In 1980, ICSC approved and recommended a job description format to be used in describing Professional and higher category jobs at headquarters locations and established field offices. In 1985, this format was adapted for use in describing project posts. Both formats are presented below.

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2 Official Records of the General Assembly, Fortieth session, A/40/30, para. 214(c) and ICSC/21/R.24, annex VI.
A. ICSC format for Professional and higher category jobs at headquarters and established field offices

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

Organization: _______________________

Job title ______________________________________________________

Grade of job __________________________________________________

Job title of incumbent's supervisor: _______________________________

Organizational setting of the job:

Department _________________________________________________________________

Division or branch ___________________________________________________________

Section _____________________________________________________________________

Unit _______________________________________________________________________

Professionals directly supervised by the incumbent:

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<th>Job title</th>
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Technical and administrative support staff directly supervised by the incumbent:

Total number: ________________________________________________________________
1. Summarize the duties and responsibilities of the position and indicate the percentage of time spent on each.

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<th>Duties</th>
<th>% of time</th>
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2. What are the **minimum** knowledge requirements of the job?

   Education required __________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

   Length of practical experience required:

   At national and/or __________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

   At international level ______________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

   Language(s) proficiency required _____________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

3. **Work role:** What does the job require the incumbent to do? (Discuss the analysis, interpretation, adaptation, innovation, planning, coordinating and directing that the job requires)

   _________________________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________

   _________________________________________________________________________
4. What subject area(s) or field(s) of work does the job cover and to what degree is specialization in these required?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

5. Describe the control exercised by the supervisor in terms of planning, guiding and reviewing the incumbent's work:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

6. Indicate which regulations, manuals, precedents or other guidelines apply to the incumbent's work and what extent the incumbent is permitted to deviate from established guidelines or establish new ones:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
7. With whom (indicate title only) and for what purpose is the incumbent required to have contacts in the job? Indicate the frequency of each contact (Describe the most typical, not the most unusual, contacts).

(a) List contacts **inside the organization** required by the work of the job:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job title and organization (or equivalent title)</th>
<th>Purpose of contacts</th>
<th>Frequency/method</th>
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</table>

(b) List contacts **outside the organization** required by the work of the job:

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<tr>
<th>Job title and organization (or equivalent title)</th>
<th>Purpose of contacts</th>
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8. Describe the most important type(s) of decision(s) the incumbent is authorized to take and why these are important:

____________________________________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________________

9. Describe the most important types of proposals expected of the incumbent in the job and why these are important:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
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10. Describe the most damaging involuntary error(s) that could be made by the incumbent in the work and
the effect(s) that would result:

_____________________________________________________________________________
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Extra space for replies: (please indicate the corresponding question)
B. ICSC format for Professional and higher category jobs in project posts

PROJECT JOB DESCRIPTION:

Organization: ______________________________________________________

Job title: __________________________________________________________

Grade of job: ______________________________________________________

Job title of incumbent's supervisor: ________________________________

Organizational setting of the job:

Provide an organization chart depicting both the technical and administrative reporting relationships. The job being described should be clearly identified and enclosed in a box. The organization chart should indicate:

a. the level and location (duty station/country/region/HQ) of posts providing technical supervision or guidance (use solid line);

b. the grade level and location (duty station/country/region/HQ) of posts providing administrative supervision or guidance (use dotted line);
c. national counterpart staff directly providing substantive guidance;

d. all jobs supervised directly by the incumbent;

e. internationally recruited staff with an asterisk (*) to help make the distinction between national and international staff.

Legend:

Technical reporting: ____________________
Administrative reporting: -----------------------
Internationally recruited staff: *
Job being described: ____________________
1. Summarize the duties and responsibilities of the position and indicate the percentage of time spent on each:

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<tr>
<th>Duties</th>
<th>% of time</th>
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</table>
2. What are the minimum knowledge requirements of the job?

Education required

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Length of practical experience required:

At national level (and/or) ____________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
At international level) _______________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Language(s) proficiency required _____________________________________________

3. **Work role**: What does the job require the incumbent to do in terms of analysis, interpretation, adaptation, innovation, planning, coordinating and direction, etc.

________________________________________________________________________
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4. What subject area(s) or field(s) of work does the job cover, and to what degree is specialization in each area required? Describe the full range of application within each area that is required (the maximum range being from practical application to theoretical research):

____________________________________________________________________________
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5. Describe the roles of other officials, both national and international, in planning, guiding and reviewing the incumbent's work:

____________________________________________________________________________
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6. List project documents and other guidelines (e.g. regulations, manuals, precedents) which apply to the incumbent's work and indicate the extent to which the incumbent is permitted to deviate from, or establish guidelines:

____________________________________________________________________________
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7. With whom (indicate title only) and for what purpose is the incumbent required to have contacts in the job? Indicate the frequency of each contact (Describe the most typical, not the most unusual, contacts).

(a) Percentage of time spent away from the duty station on mission: ___________%

(b) List contacts **in the duty station** required by the work of the job:

**Persons contacted:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job title and organization (or equivalent title)</th>
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(c) List contacts **outside the duty station** required by the work of the job:

**Persons contacted:**

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9. Describe the most important types of proposals expected of the incumbent in the job and why these are important:

____________________________________________________________________________
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10. Describe the most damaging involuntary error(s) that could be made by the incumbent in the work and the effect(s) that would result:

____________________________________________________________________________
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Extra space for replies: (please indicate the corresponding question)
III. SUGGESTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE JOB DESCRIPTION

3. The following suggestions, although some may appear obvious, are provided to assist personnel management specialists, line managers and staff in completing job descriptions of posts in the Professional and higher categories.

A. General suggestions

(a) The job description form is intended to elicit information about the job, not the incumbent of the post. Although it is recognized that the incumbent can affect the job, care should be taken to describe characteristics of the job and not of the incumbent.

(b) The job description should reflect management's decision about the nature and level of work assigned to a job; it is an official document which should remain valid for some time (3 - 5 years).

(c) Read the form through before starting to complete it.

(d) Collect all pertinent job data by interviewing the incumbent and/or the immediate supervisor, reviewing the existing job description, observing work in progress, reviewing organizational or programme materials and/or reviewing job descriptions of similar jobs, supervisor and subordinate jobs.

(e) The job description should be written for the average reader. REMEMBER - the job description has many uses and readers may not be specialists in your field of work.

(f) The job description should be clear and concise: be brief in your replies, while covering the essential aspects of the job; avoid descriptions of minor duties, avoid repetition, summarize rather than providing rambling narrative.

(g) Ensure consistency in your answers: in particular, review the statement of duties and responsibilities (question No. 1) and see that these are consistent with answers provided in the following questions.

(h) Concentrate on outputs or end products (what is produced or what the work leads up to). Write facts, not appraisals or evaluations of the work.

(i) Describe current work - not work which may have been done at one time in the past.

(j) All verbs should be in the present tense. Avoid ambiguous terms such as "assist", "handle" and
B. Suggestions related to specific questions

(a) **Question 1.** The duties and responsibilities are facts about the job. WHAT, WHY and HOW.

(i) Describe WHAT the job does. Organize the job into 3 to 5 objectives, called duties. List them in a logical order (e.g. order of importance to the programme, sequential order, order of time spent on each duty). Use active verbs, in the present tense.

(ii) Expand each duty statement to include information on the programme and environment, revealing the scope, complexity or difficulty of the work (WHY it is done).

(iii) Describe the tasks involved or processes for each duty (HOW it is done).

(iv) Indicate the percentage of time spent on each major objective - duty. Percentage of time should be calculated on an average annual basis. Duties accounting for less than 5 per cent should not be identified individually, but may be grouped under one duty i.e. "performs other related duties such as ...".

(b) **Question 2.** Indicate the minimum professional qualifications, relevant experience and language(s) proficiency required in order to perform the job, regardless of the particular qualifications and experience of the present incumbent.

(c) **Question 3.** Describe the involvement required of the incumbent in achieving the objectives of the job.

(d) **Question 4.** Indicate the scope or diversity of the work (field of specialization) and the depth of treatment of subject matter that is required.

(e) **Question 5.** Describe how assignments are given to the incumbent and the nature of the instructions received (i.e. indication of the results to be obtained, instructions as to the methods of work, etc.) Explain the type of guidance and assistance provided the supervisor or other persons in the execution of the work. Indicate what review, verification or other checking is made of the work while in process or when completed.

(f) **Question 6.** The term guidelines covers such items as rules, regulations, procedures, manuals, instructions, laws, relevant publications, past precedents, professional practices, etc.

(g) **Question 7.** Explain the purpose of contacts as clearly as possible (i.e. to obtain information on..., to seek funding for..., to commit the organization on..., etc.). Be specific when indicating the frequency of contacts (i.e. once a year, twice a month, daily and not sometimes or very frequently).
(h) **Question 10.** Indicate in terms of time, quality, money or other factors, the damage to the organization's programmes that could result from the incumbent's involuntary errors.
III. GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN JOB DESCRIPTIONS

ACT To exert one's powers in such a way as to bring about an effect; to carry out a purpose. To act for; to assume the responsibilities of another in his/her absence

ADMINISTER To manage or direct the application or execution of; to administrate

ADOPT To take and apply or put into practice; to accept, as a report

ADVISE To give advice or to offer counsel on the basis of professional expertise

AFFIRM To confirm or ratify

ALIGN To arrange or form in a line

AMEND To change or modify

ANALYSE To study the factors of a situation or problem in order to determine the solution or outcome

ANTICIPATE To foresee events, trends, consequences or problems

APPLY To adjust or direct; to put in use, as a rule

APPRaise To evaluate as to quality, status, effectiveness

APPROVE To sanction officially; to accept as satisfactory; to ratify (thereby assuming responsibility for). Used only in the situation where individual has final authority.

ARRANGE To place in proper order; to make an agreement with another or others

ASCERTAIN To find out or learn for a certainty

ASSEMBLE To collect or gather together in a predetermined order; to fit together the parts

ASSIGN To fix, specify or delegate. Legally to transfer or make over to another

ASSIST To help or aid other groups or persons in the performance of some task for which the party being assisted has prime responsibility
ASSUME  To take to or upon oneself; to undertake

ASSURE  To confirm, to make certain of; to convey to others the certainty that an event or action will take place

ATTEND  To be present

AUDIT  Final and official examination of actions, e.g. personnel, accounting. To examine officially in order to assess performance against regulations and accepted standards

AUTHORIZE  To empower; to permit; to establish by authority (this implies that prior approval in principle has been given by higher authority as participation in the activity with a directorate or section deputized to authorize individual requests)

CALCULATE  To ascertain by computation

CANCEL  To strike out or cross out

CARRY OUT  To do whatever is required to accomplish a specific action

CIRCULATE  To disseminate; to distribute in accordance with a plan

CLASSIFY  To separate into groups having systematic relations

CLEAR  To obtain the concurrence, dissent or agreement of other officers prior to signature

COLLABORATE  To work or act jointly with others

COLLATE  To bring together in a predetermined order

COLLECT  To gather facts or data; to assemble, to accumulate

COMPLETE  To collect into a volume; to compose out of materials from other documents

COMPOSE  To make up, to fashion, to arrange

CONDUCT  To assume personal responsibility for completion of work studies, analyses, etc.; to chair or preside at meetings or negotiations

CONSOLIDATE  To combine into a single whole

CONSULT  To seek the advice of another; to confer; to refer to
CONTROL  To check, verify or regulate; to exercise directly a guiding or restraining power over some one or thing; to direct or manage

COOPERATE  To act or operate jointly with others; to collaborate

COORDINATE  To bring different activities or people into common action, condition, etc.

CORRELATE  To bring an object or activity into mutual relationship with another

DECIDE  To render judgement or settle on an action to be taken when there is a choice to be made

DELEGATE  To entrust to the care or management of another

DESIGN  To conceive, plan for, construct the groundwork or plot of a study, project, etc.; implies also writing of a carefully set plan, ordering the details and scheme of actions to be followed by a given organizational unit

DETERMINE  To fix conclusively or authoritatively; to decide; to make a decision

DEVELOP  To go through the process of evolving a specified action or plan; to make apparent; to bring to light; to make more available or useable

DIRECT  To give authoritative instructions which will guide performance or regulate and control activities; to manage

DISSEMINATE  To spread information or ideas

DRAFT  To write or compose papers in rough or preliminary form. Often for clearance and approval by others

EDIT  To revise and prepare as for publication

ENSURE  To take all steps necessary to make certain that a specified action takes place

ESTABLISH  To secure permanent acceptance for a specific action or requirement

ESTIMATE  To fix or calculate approximately

EVALUATE  To appraise; to ascertain the value of; to assess
EXAMINE To investigate; to scrutinize; to subject to inquiry by inspection or test
EXECUTE To carry into effect; to follow through to the end; to complete
EXERCISE To bring to bear or employ actively, as exercise authority and influence
EXPEDITE To hasten the movement or progress of; to remove obstacles; to accelerate
FACILITATE To make easy or less difficult
FOLLOW-UP To check the progress of; to see if results are satisfactory
FORECAST To predict realistically future events or possible results of actions
FORMULATE To put into a systematized statement; to develop or devise a plan, policy or procedure
FURNISH To provide, supply or give
IMPLEMENT To carry out, fulfill; to perform acts essential to the execution of a plan or programme, to give effect to
INFORM To instruct; to communicate knowledge of
INITIATE To originate; to begin; to introduce for the first time, as a plan, policy or procedure
INSPECT To examine carefully and critically
INSTRUCT To impart knowledge to; to supply direction to
INTERPRET To explain or tell the meaning of; to elucidate
INTERVIEW To question in order to obtain facts or opinions
INVESTIGATE To inquire into, observe and search, in order to ascertain facts, this action also may involve examination of facts for the purpose of drawing conclusions
ISSUE To formally distribute
MAINTAIN To hold or keep in any condition; to keep up to date or current, as records
MANAGE  To control and direct; to guide; to administer
MONITOR  To watch over in order to discern indications of possible deviation from acceptable standards
MOTIVATE  To inspire collaborators or subordinates, encourage their maximum efficiency in accomplishing work assignments
NOTIFY  To give notice to; to inform
OBSERVE  To perceive or notice, to watch
OBTAIN  To acquire, to gain possession of
OPERATE  To conduct or perform activity
ORGANIZE  To arrange or form into a coherent unity or functioning whole
ORIGINATE  To produce as new, or to begin the use of
OVERSEE  To supervise persons in more subordinate positions or on more trivial matters
PARTICIPATE  To take part in; to have a share in common with others in acting as specified
PERFORM  To carry on to a finish; to accomplish; to execute
PLAN  To devise a project, a method or course of action
PREPARE  To go through the process of making the specified item, or initially filling out required forms, where several more specific actions (such as investigate, develop, determine, write, type, etc.) may be involved
PRESIDE  To occupy the place of authority to direct for the purpose of regulating proceedings
PROCESS  To subject to some special treatment, to handle in accordance with prescribed procedures
PROMOTE  To contribute to the growth, advancement or prosperity of
PROVIDE  To supply for use or give what may be required
PUBLISH To oversee the production of a document
RECEIVE To take as something that is offered
RECOMMEND To advise a course of action to other persons who have the primary responsibility for adopting and carrying out the actions or procedures
RECORD To register, make a record of
REFER To send, or otherwise bring to the attention of another, something which requires action on his/her part
RELEASE To permit the publication of, dissemination of; at a specified date but not before
RENDER To furnish; to contribute
REPRESENT To take the place of, to speak in the name of
REPORT To furnish information or data
TO BE RESPONSIBLE To be accountable for own decisions
REVIEW To go over or examine deliberately or critically; usually with a view to approval or dissent; analyse results for the purpose of giving an opinion
REVISE To make a new, improved or up to date version of
SCHEDULE To plan a time table, to set specific times for
SCREEN To examine closely, generally so as to separate one group or class from another
SEARCH To seek by looking over and through, to subject to a thorough inspection for the purpose of finding something or to probe into what is specified
SECURE To get possession of; to obtain
SEE To make certain of; to learn through observation
SELECT To take as preference from among others, to pick out
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SERVE</td>
<td>To participate actively in the performance of an assignment made to a group</td>
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<tr>
<td>STUDY</td>
<td>To consider attentively; to ponder or fix the mind closely upon a subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUBMIT</td>
<td>To offer or put forward, for consideration and judgement or decision of another</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUPERVISE</td>
<td>To exercise active direction over; to superintend; to oversee</td>
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<tr>
<td>SURVEY</td>
<td>To determine the form, extent, position, etc., of a situation, usually in connection with gathering of information</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRAIN</td>
<td>To increase skill or knowledge by capable instruction; usually in relation to a pre-determined standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>VERIFY</td>
<td>To prove to be true or accurate; to confirm or substantiate; to test or check the accuracy of</td>
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