



Job Descriptions – Managers Guide

This is a guide for managers to understand the importance of Job Descriptions and to provide support in creating or revising a job description. The Job Description Template should be used and Managers should partner with Human Resources to come up with a final job description.

Job descriptions are an essential part of defining the purpose and responsibilities of a position. Job descriptions improve an organization's ability to manage people and roles in the following ways:

- Clarifies employer expectations for employee
- Provides basis of measuring job performance
- Provides clear description of role for job candidates
- Provides a structure and discipline for company to understand and structure all jobs and ensure necessary activities, duties and responsibilities are covered by one job or another
- Provides continuity of role parameters irrespective of manager interpretation
- Enables pay and grading systems to be structured fairly and logically
- Prevents arbitrary interpretation of role content and limit by employee and employer and manager
- Essential reference tool in issues of employee/employer dispute
- Essential reference tool for discipline issues
- Provides important reference points for training and development areas
- Provides neutral and objective (as opposed to subjective or arbitrary) reference points for appraisals, performance reviews and counseling
- Enables formulation of skill set and behavior set requirements per role
- Enables organization to structure and manage roles in a uniform way, thus increasing efficiency and effectiveness of recruitment, training and development, organizational structure, work flow and activities, customer service, etc
- Enables factual view (as opposed to instinctual) to be taken by employees and managers in career progression and succession planning

Job Descriptions help ensure compliance with various laws and policies including the Americans with Disabilities Act (establish the essential functions of a position so potential accommodations can be arranged) and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

Below are the titles of the sections of the job description along with notes on each section.

Title: Full center name should be the second line

Information Box:

Position Title: should be descriptive and not too involved – something that would be recognized outside of AURA – this may be a “business card” title while the code and title in Ultipro may be more generic. Example would be position title of Electronics Engineer using the generic Engineer code/title for Ultipro that corresponds to the level of the specific position (Associate Engineer, Senior Engineer)

Job Code: will be assigned by HR and is used in Ultipro

Pay Grade: will be assigned by HR based upon job requirements

Position Reports To: use a position title, not name



Exempt/Non-Exempt: based upon FLSA law – HR will determine the status for the position based upon the functions and responsibilities

EEO Job: set by Department of Labor – HR will determine correct classification

General Description of Position:

Brief narrative that highlights the purpose of the job, major role and placement in the organization including the reason the job exists but refraining from including specific details about the job. It should also refrain from using technical and job-specific jargon. Usually 2 – 4 sentences.

Essential Functions:

- List primary functions which must be accomplished in the job, ordered in descending order of time required to complete the task, starting with the tasks that take up the most time and ending with tasks that take up the least amount of time – if there is a function that does not take a lot of time, but is highly important, it may need to be higher on the list.
- Provides basis for performance review and discussion (can the incumbent see him/herself performing these tasks on a regular basis?).
- Be as specific as possible when describing the duties.
- Begin each function with an “action verb” (e.g. develop, manage, create, revise, provide, etc.).
- Omit temporary or minor tasks.
- Describe all tasks in the present tense and refrain from including acronyms and abbreviations, unless previously written out.

*Note: The two Essential Functions listed below are included in the job description template and **must be included** in ALL Job Descriptions at the end of relevant essential functions. The first addresses responsibilities related to AURA property and the second addresses compliance.*

- All AURA employees are responsible for the proper management and control of all AURA property within their work area, whether assigned to them or someone else. This responsibility includes reporting any known missing, stolen, or non-working property in their work area to their supervisor or the AURA Property Officer. For detailed information on proper custodial care of government property, refer to the AURA Employee Handbook at <http://hr.aura-astronomy.org/?q=handbook>.
- Responsible for ensuring compliance with government award terms and conditions assigned to this position or subordinates of this position as defined in the Vela Award Management system, <https://cas.aura-astronomy.org/Awards>.

*Essential functions are the fundamental, crucial job duties performed in a position. They do not include marginal functions, which are extra or incidental duties. A function may be essential because:

1. The position exists to perform that function.
2. There are a limited number of employees available who could perform that function.
3. The function is highly specialized, and the incumbent is hired for special expertise or ability to perform it.

It is also critical to separate the function, which creates a desired outcome, from the method, which is a way of performing a function. An essential function is a completed task, not how that task is



completed. Results-oriented language will help ensure this distinction. For example, it may be an essential function of a job to “relocate (as opposed to lift) 50 lb. boxes.”

Questions to ask to determine which functions are essential include:

1. Is the function a primary reason for which the position was established?

For example: A floating supervisor job exists to provide a substitute when regular supervisors on day, night, and graveyard shifts are absent. So, an essential function of the job may be to work at any time of day.

2. Would removing the function fundamentally change the position, or eliminate the need for the position?

For example: Removing the function “provide guidance and resources to clients” from a customer service position would fundamentally alter the job and question the need for it.

3. Is transferring the function impossible due to a lack of available employees?

For example: It may be an essential function for a file clerk to answer the telephone if there are only three employees in a very busy office and each employee has to perform many different tasks.

4. Are there severe consequences if the position is not required to perform the function?

For example: A firefighter may rarely have to carry a heavy person from a burning building, but it is an essential function of the job because of the serious consequences of not performing it.

5. Does the function require specialized expertise?

For example: Dual language positions may have essential functions related to speaking a second language fluently. Or, accountant positions may have essential functions that require licensure as a Certified Public Accountant.

If any of the above criteria are met, the function is likely essential.

Does percentage of time spent on a function determine whether or not it is essential?

No, a function may be essential regardless of the amount of time spent performing it. For example, a pilot is required to take off, fly, and land airplanes. The majority of the pilot’s time is spent flying in the air; however, it is an essential function of the job to land the plane.

Other Functions:

This is where you can list functions that are not considered essential but would still be performed by employees holding this position.

*Note: The bullet listed below is included in the job description template and **must be included** in ALL Job Descriptions under “**Other Functions:**”.*

- Other duties as assigned

Required Education/Experience/Skills/Abilities:

Education: Consider the level of education/training required of a person successfully performing this job. In addition to the “required/essential” education/training, “desirable” education/training can also be listed; however, be sure to clearly differentiate between the two. For example, “*Bachelors in Engineering is required; Ph.D. in Engineering is desirable.*” May be restated in the “Preferred...” section below. Also include any licenses and certifications needed for the job.



Experience: Be as specific as possible when including the type of experience necessary and the number of years required. List the minimum experience required to perform the job. For instance, use “3-5 years experience” rather than “5 years experience”. Indicate whether the type and level of experience is desirable or essential.

Skills: Record any special skills or knowledge that the incumbent must possess in order to adequately perform the job. Common examples of required skills included in job descriptions are: “*fluency in English essential,*” “*familiarity with web based design programs*”

Abilities: Anything about the job that is not an education/experience/skill requirement, such as: “*Job requires high degree of professionalism and discretion. Must be able to build and maintain good working relationships with team members.*”

*Note: There is a bullet listed under “**Required Education/Experience/Skills/Abilities:**” in the job description template with “Must have a valid Driver’s License; clean driving record; ability to drive a 4 wheel drive vehicle”. This language should only be included in the final job description **if the requirement is needed** for the position.*

Preferred Education/Experience/Skills/Abilities:

Any additional or preferred items from the categories above that aren’t minimum requirements but would be helpful in performing the job.

*Note: The entire “**Preferred Education/Experience/Skills/Abilities:**” section can be removed if it is not applicable.*

Physical Demands:

In the job description template there are general office job physical demands that should be reviewed and included if applicable. There is also an additional section of physical demands labeled “ADDITIONAL for TECH/LABOR/OPERATOR” that may apply to more physical type of jobs such as techs or operators – these need to be reviewed carefully and can be adjusted if needed (especially frequency or amount of the various types of physical activities **and** coordinating the amount of “lbs” regarding the lifting requirement in bullet #3 under Physical Demands to coincide with bullet #1 under ADDITIONAL for TECH/LABOR/OPERATOR).

Notes:

*There is a bullet in the job description template about travel that should be reviewed and **revised if needed** – especially if the job requires frequent travel.*

*There are bullets with wording about the various summits in the job description template that **must be included** if the position requires working on any of the summits. Only the applicable summit information should be included. The others should be deleted.*

Last Updated: *Note: Insert the month and year of the most recent update here in the following format Month YYYY (e.g. January 2017)*



Managers and HR should partner to create and revise job descriptions – many times this will be part of a recruitment process. Some good sources of wording on functions and requirements can be found by searching job ads and publically available job descriptions on the internet. When using pieces of other descriptions, be sure that verb tense and tone match throughout the document.

Sources

* Washington State Human Resources website (www.hr.wa.gov)