

## Information Sheet: Job Descriptions & Person Specifications.

The job description needs to be written first as it defines the JOB, then it is possible to write the person specification, which defines the PERSON needed to carry out the JOB.

The person specification is then used as the basis of shortlisting and interviewing.

### Job analysis

- Job descriptions and person specifications can not be written until some form of job analysis is completed. This should provide information about the job (tasks and responsibilities) and the basic skills and competence required to carry out the job. A job analysis may have been carried out as part of a HUMAN RESOURCE PLAN; alternatively there are a number of techniques for determining what jobs are needed in an enterprise;
- In a community enterprise it is likely that there will be several different types of worker (staff, volunteer, management committee member etc) and inevitably this may introduce a complex range of relationships. It is useful to have job descriptions for all those involved in the enterprise, whether paid or not, to clarify responsibilities and expectations. Part of the job analysis would be to analyse some of the issues that might arise and ensure that the job description is clear in respect to boundaries of responsibility, expectations, and roles.
- Jobs or roles: Some job descriptions are limited to the job and its tasks and duties. Roles refer to the part played within a wider context, where they contribute to the organisation's objectives and processes. Job descriptions for people working within community enterprises would be more useful if the nature and scope of the roles was included, though this is optional. If roles are to be included, then they need to be considered as part of the job analysis.
- Teamwork, values and other policies could, as with roles, be included in some way in the job description;
- Job sharing and other arrangements such as home-working also need to be considered as part of the job analysis. As a "Good Employer" the enterprise will seek to improve access to jobs for those with caring responsibilities, disabilities etc. and the extent of flexibility in working arrangements should be clarified.

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## Preparing job descriptions

The job description is a basic document that is deemed a part of the contract of employment, and is used to produce the person specification. Not only will it be one of the main documents used to recruit for any post, it also may be used for job evaluation (to determine appropriate pay levels) and for determining training needs.

The job description should not be too detailed or complicated, as some degree of flexibility is helpful in organisations where flat management structures and teamwork are an important value. The main headings would include:-

- Job Title: should indicate as clearly as possible the main function of the job, and if the organisation has a hierarchy of responsibility, then this might be reflected in the title as well;
- Reporting lines (to whom the post is responsible)
- Overall purpose of the job: Summary of the main purpose of the job and the contribution the job holder would make to the enterprise;
- Main duties and tasks: this will be a list of the principal areas of responsibility or accountability. The list may be created by identifying all the tasks and activities the job involves and grouping them together under "main activity areas". Then phrase each "activity area" in terms of what the job holder is expected to achieve, starting with a verb (for

example, "Co-ordinates the process of completing a Social Audit")

- (if desired) Role Definition: a description of the nature and scope of the job as it relates to the context of the organisation;
- (if appropriate) Main Contacts: indicating the anticipated contacts (in terms of Job Titles) for this job;
- Supervisory responsibility: who (using Job Titles) this job supervises;
- Starting date and Hours of Work
- Main Conditions of Employment: Conditions that are not negotiable, such as the requirement to accept and promote equalities policies, adherence to health and safety policies;
- Salary and additional benefits, such as pension, annual leave, sick pay, bonus opportunities etc.

## Preparing person specifications

The person specification describes the qualities needed to carry out the key areas of work outlined in the job description, including skills, knowledge, experience and attitudes. The person specification will generally form the basis for short listing, the questions asked at the interview and the evaluation of the applicants' answers.

Person specifications should not be so specific or onerous as to rule out an applicant who would be able to do the job, and care should be taken

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to avoid indirect discrimination. Each requirement should be justified by the job description. Often person specifications have a list of essential requirements and a list of desirable requirements, the latter only being considered where a number of people all meet the essential requirements. Do not include a requirement that can not be assessed within the selection process. The general headings include: -

- Experience: the minimum experience essential to carry out the job;
- Work-based skills, aptitudes, knowledge and abilities: a detailed list of relevant areas where the job holder must show competence ie meet a specified standard of performance;
- Personal or behavioural attributes: identify personal characteristics which are required in order to carry out the job description, for example communication skills, collaborative attitude;
- Other requirements: essential requirements or characteristics necessary to carry out the job, such as availability to work at weekends;
- Education/qualifications/training: avoid as far as possible stating a particular degree, diploma or other qualification, as this may unnecessarily rule out a satisfactory candidate.

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