Competency-based Job Descriptions

Purpose:

Create a competency-based job description for a position in your epidemiology department utilizing the Applied Epidemiology Competencies (AECs).

What is a Competency-based Job Description?

A competency-based job description is a tool that describes the essential duties, responsibilities, competencies, and qualifications for a specific job at your organization. Job descriptions are key for evaluating a candidate's suitability for a role, assessing current employees' skills and areas for growth, assigning salary levels or pay grades, and providing transparency about the responsibilities of the position.

Review the following steps to create a competency-based job description using the AECs for a position in your department.

Step 1:

Conduct a job analysis

The first step in creating a job description is to perform a job analysis to identify what specific tasks should be assigned to the job, what knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that role will need, and what the business case is for the position. This analysis may involve many individuals including the staff currently performing that role or similar roles, supervisors and managers, human resources, epidemiology departmental leads, other department leads, organizational leadership, funders or sponsors, outside consultants, and others.

This step can include performing interviews, observing job tasks, providing questionnaires, and conducting internal and external research to identify KSAs, physical characteristics of the role, environmental factors, and expected credentials or experience.

Step 2:

Determine the role's essential functions

After conducting the job analysis, the essential functions of the job should be identified. These are the necessary or required tasks that define this job, how often they are done (typically each is at least 5% of the role's time), and how they should be performed. Essential tasks are activities that if they are not performed, then departmental operations will be disrupted or there will be other serious consequences. Often these functions cannot be redesigned or reassigned to other individuals.

Consider asking questions like:
- What do I want this role to do?
- What projects will this individual be working on?
- What will their daily tasks include?
- What is the goal of those tasks?

What do you want this role to do?
(Write 3-5 factual statements answering this question. Be as specific as possible and use strong action verbs [e.g., assess, monitor, evaluate, analyze, design, apply])

After these statements have been generated, review the AECs at the competency level to highlight key skills that the individual performing this job would need to perform their day-to-day work. The CSTE 2023 AECs Report can be found here for reference.

If this is a managerial role, consider including these competencies:

Competency 5.1: Describes factors that affect the financial and operational health of the organization (e.g.,fair treatment of staff, comprehensive policies and practice, support from the governing body and community, sustainability of funding, training of managers)

Competency 5.3: Manages operational and financial resources for epidemiologic activities

Competency 5.5: Manages human capital (including recruitment, retention, professional development of staff)

Competency 6.3: Engages in performance management of self and other team members

Competency 6.4: Manages workforce development

If this role has an emphasis on <u>informatics</u>, consider including these competencies:

- **Competency 2.3:** Applies public health informatics in using epidemiologic data, information, and knowledge (e.g., data collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination)
- **Competency 2.4:** Manages information systems to promote effectiveness and security of data collection, processing, and analysis

If this is a <u>senior scientist</u> role, consider including these competencies:

Competency 1.3: Designs surveillance systems

Competency 1.9: Applies evidence-based interventions and control measures (e.g., considering specific community needs)

Competency 3.5: Conducts investigations and interviews accommodating the needs of the population

Competency 7.4: Applies principles of ethical and legal practice to epidemiologic activities, data analysis, assessment, and dissemination

Competency 7.5: Advocates for policies and public health actions that improve community health and resilience

Once the competencies for this role have been selected based on the identified essential functions, consider specific sub-competencies based on the expected tier of the position. These sub-competencies can be used as is or modified, based on organizational need, in the job description's essential functions and non-essential functions sections.

Step 3:

Draft the job description

The job description should be drafted and reviewed by relevant individuals within the organization including, as appropriate, direct position management, departmental management, organizational leadership, human resources, and others. These individuals should review the job description for accuracy, legal and other compliance, and unconscious bias.

Good examples of public health job descriptions, including for an Epidemiologist and many other roles, can be found here.

Specific Components of a Job Description

The specific items included in job descriptions may vary by organization but should be consistent throughout that organization. The following items are typical of job descriptions but ensure that if you are creating a job description for your organization that you obtain the appropriate form(s) and required sections from human resources or management.

Added	Section	Description
	Job title	Use a clear and appropriate title that represents the key functions of the job. If the job classification is not descriptive for a lay audience, consider adding an additional title if possible.
	Job summary	Describe in a few sentences the key job functions, how the job contributes to the organization, and emphasize the benefits of working at the organization (mission, culture, successes benefits, growth). For health department roles, consider including public service motivation language that underscores the ability of the organization to improve health and/or the community.
	Classification (exempt or nonexempt)	Describe if the position is considered exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act's (FLSA) overtime regulations. If employees are considered exempt, they are typically excluded from the FLSA's federal overtime requirements to receive overtime pay for hours worked over a 40-hour work week.
	Reports to whom	List which role this job reports to (e.g., reports to deputy director).
	Date written or reviewed	List the date the job description was written or last reviewed.
	Salary grade/level	Include the compensation level or pay ranges for this role. **Note:** this may be required to be included by law depending on your organization or state.
	Position type and expected hours	Note if the position is full time or part time and if there are expected hours and days for the work shift.

Added	Section	Description
	Benefits	List relevant and applicable benefits of your organization including but not limited to vacation/sick time/holidays, training and development commitment, flexible work schedules, retirement plans and contribution, health insurance coverage, tuition reimbursement, career ladder)
	Essential functions	List the key activities/tasks the role will perform that are critical for operations and what percentage of time this role will devote to them. See Step 2 above for more details on determining essential functions.
	Non-essential functions	List job functions that account for less than 5% of the role such as 'other duties as assigned'. These tasks are distinguished from essential functions in that they can be reassigned to others without significantly changing the job's duties and responsibilities.
	Work environment/ Physical demands	Describe the work environment and factors that will affect the individual working and what physical abilities the individual must have to perform the job (sitting, lifting, driving, standing, conducting field/outbreak investigations, etc.) and how frequently. **Note:** if individuals are funded through a grant, their job functions may be restricted to working only on specific projects or topics.
	Supervisory responsibilities	Include whether this role will supervise others and the number of direct reports.
	Location	Describe the physical location of the workplace, whether the job is remote, or hybrid (and what that schedule looks like).
	Travel	Include information about the required percentage of travel time for the position, if the travel is local, national, or international, and whether it is overnight.

Added	Section	Description
	Affirmative Action Plan (AAP)/ Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) language	Include clauses required outlining federal contractor requirements and practices and/or equal employer opportunity statement.
	Minimum qualifications	List the minimum knowledge, competencies, abilities, education, licenses, certifications, years of experience, attributes (team player, works well independently, detail-oriented, resolves conflict independently), etc. that are needed to perform this role. Think carefully about what is needed to perform the role, not necessarily what the incumbent has, if there is one.
	Preferred qualifications	List additional knowledge, competencies, abilities, education, licenses, certifications, years of experience, attributes (team player, works well independently, detail-oriented, resolves conflict independently), etc. that would be desirable for an individual performing this role.
	Application process	List the steps of the process, how to request accommodations, and a contact person if possible.

It may also be beneficial to include a disclaimer that the information in the job description is not a comprehensive list of duties, responsibilities, or activities and they can change at any time potentially without notice, if needed for your organization.

Creating a Job Posting from the Job Description

The job description should be converted into a job posting and posted on the appropriate job boards where potential candidates may find the position. Ensure the posting has the appropriate keywords and search engine optimization (SEO) for the job and industry. The job posting should be available to a representative audience who may have the qualifications and competencies needed so should be posted where those individuals would be likely to see the posting (major job boards, professional social media sites, colleges and universities with epidemiology programs, professional organizations, community-based organizations, etc.).

Review the job description regularly

Periodically review job descriptions to ensure they are still appropriate and current for the roles they describe. Revision should be considered especially when there have been significant changes to the KSAs, functions, and qualifications for the position.

References:

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Authors:

Julianne L. Baron, PhD, CPH, RBP, Science and Safety Consulting, Paid Consultant
Sarah Auer, MPH, CHES, Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, Program Analyst II
Jessica Arrazola, DrPH, MPH, MCHES, Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, Director of Educational Strategy