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Role Description Development Guideline

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Note: Headings marked with an asterisk denotes that it is a mandatory field within the Role Description.

1 Role Description

Overview

The Role Description serves a range of workforce management purposes, including:

- the basis for job evaluation
- a source of information for job applicants (both internal and external to the public sector)
- the basis for deciding the capability levels to be assessed in recruiting to a role
- a reference point for performance agreements and reviews
- a starting point for identification of learning and development activities, and
- a basis for staff to assess potential next career steps, through comparison of requirements.

Role Descriptions typically include information about the:

- organisation
- primary purpose of the role
- key accountabilities
- key challenges
- key relationships
- capabilities (knowledge, skills and abilities) required for competent performance of the role
- dimensions of the role such as decision making capacity, reporting lines and budget, and
- essential requirements such as qualifications, necessary experience, employment screening checks, licence requirements etc.

Wherever possible, Role Descriptions should be generic, rather than specific to individual roles. Generic Role Descriptions can be developed at the agency, cluster or sector level (at the sector level these will be termed 'sector' rather than 'generic') and the content should be broadly applicable to groups and types of roles – for example, policy roles.

Increased use of sector Role Descriptions in place of highly individualised Role Descriptions will maximise efficiency, promote sector consistency and facilitate employee mobility.

Role Descriptions should not include short term time-limited projects or goals which may very quickly become out of date. Specific short-term projects are better placed in performance agreements.

Role Descriptions will require review at regular intervals such as when a vacancy occurs, organisational priorities change, or as part of broader workforce planning. Role vacancy provides an opportunity to review the role to ensure it is aligned to organisational priorities and to determine whether there is a continued need for the role in its current form, or whether a different combination of roles at particular classifications is better suited to deliver organisational outputs and outcomes.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is progressively developing a library of sector Role Descriptions for use by Agencies across the sector. When developing a Role Description not contained within the library, agencies or clusters should, as a first option, look at equivalent roles within their cluster and across the sector to check whether there is an existing similar Role Description which can be utilised.

The Role Description template includes both mandatory and non mandatory fields.

The mandatory fields are marked with an asterisk (*) throughout this Guideline.

The non mandatory fields of the Role Description are those that will only apply to some roles (for example if the role has no direct reports or budget responsibilities).

2 Work Level Standards

for NSW Public Service Senior Executive Roles

Role Descriptions for NSW Public Service Senior Executive roles should be based on the *NSW Public Service Senior Executive Work Level Standards (WLS)*.

WLS indicate, in broad terms, the expected work to be performed at each of the senior executive bands across the NSW Public Service (except for the Department Secretaries Band). The *NSW Public Sector Capability Framework* (www.psc.nsw.gov.au/capabilityframework) works in conjunction with the WLS.

The NSW Public Service comprises a wide range of role types. Therefore the WLS are distinguished by the following five work contribution streams:

- Service/Operational Delivery Roles
- Policy Roles
- Regulatory/Compliance Roles
- Professional/Technical/Specialist Roles
- Agency Head.

When drafting a Public Service Senior Executive Role Description, language used in the ‘Primary Purpose’, ‘Key Accountabilities’, ‘Key Challenges’ and ‘Key Relationships’ should reflect the size, scope and impact of the role as described in the identified WLS Band.

Examples

The following example shows how the WLS can be reflected in the Role Description. It uses the language in the ‘Accountability’ factor of the WLS Band 1 Distinguishing Characteristics, in a Director (Senior Executive Band 1) Role Description:

Work Level Standard	Role Description
WLS Band 1 (Accountability Factor)	Director, Band 1 Role Description (Key Accountability)
<i>Effective leadership and management of a clearly defined area of organisational activity.</i>	<i>Lead and direct strategic policy, legislation and program development for the Department, to ensure that policy and legislative objectives are achieved.</i>

The next example uses the language in the ‘Key Relationships’ factor of the WLS Band 2 Distinguishing Characteristics, in an Executive Director (Senior Executive Band 2) Role Description:

Work Level Standard	Role Description
WLS Band 2 (Key Relationships Factor)	Executive Director, Band 2 Role Description (Key Relationships)
<i>They may act as a principal representative of the organisation and government and an advocate of key positions and strategies, at peak council level.</i>	<i>Represent the NSW Government at cross-government, cross-jurisdictional and outside of government meetings, state and national committees, working parties and related forums, advocating and articulating the NSW government’s position and interests.</i>

The NSW Public Sector Capability Framework does not align capabilities to classifications or executive levels. The capabilities and levels required for a role should be determined with reference to the context of the role, key accountabilities, the job environment and organisational requirements.

The *NSW Public Service Senior Executive Work Level Standards Guideline* is available at www.psc.nsw.gov.au/wls.

3 Role Description

Content

Primary Purpose of the Role

Key Accountabilities

Key Challenges

Key Relationships

Role Dimensions

Essential Requirements

All parts of the Role Description are of importance in providing a complete picture of the role. All sections should contain unique and meaningful content to assist applicants and evaluators. Duplication across sections should be avoided.

3.1 Role Information*

This section provides the following key information about the role:

- Role Title*
- Cluster
- Department/Agency
- Division/Branch/Unit
- Location
- Classification/Grade/Band*
- Executive Work Level Standards (*Contribution Streams include Service/Operational Delivery Roles; Policy Roles; Regulatory/Compliance Roles; Professional/Technical/Specialist Roles; Agency Head*)
- Kind of Employment (*e.g. Non-executive: ongoing employment, temporary employment or casual employment. Senior Executive: ongoing employment, term employment*)
- Role Number
- ANZSCO Code* – Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (*a role occupation code included in the NSW Public Sector Workforce Profile Data Collection*)
- PCAT* – Position Coding Automated Tool (*a role function code included in the NSW Public Sector Workforce Profile Data Collection*)
- Date of Approval* (*i.e. date of approval of the completed Role Description*)
- Agency website link.

3.2 Department/Agency Overview

Information about the Department/Agency and its purpose.

This information may be provided through a short statement of no more than one to two paragraphs, as shown in the example below.

To ensure currency of information and to keep Role Descriptions concise, a link to the Department/Agency website may be inserted in lieu of or in addition to the 'Department/Agency Overview'.

Example:

Agency Overview
NSW Public Service Commission

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is headed by an independent Public Service Commissioner and is a separate agency under the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 (GSE Act) that supports the Commissioner in the exercise of his/her functions and powers.

The PSC leads the design, development and implementation of the full range of workforce management strategies - including workforce capability, recruitment and assessment, performance management, and strategic workforce planning - to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the NSW public sector workforce.

Agency website: www.psc.nsw.gov.au

3.3 Primary Purpose of the Role*

A concise summary of no more than one short paragraph, of the primary purpose of the role, answering the question: 'Why does this role exist?'. The primary purpose should outline how the role assists the organisation in achieving its objectives, rather than the tasks it undertakes.

Example:

Director Policy role

The Director - Policy provides leadership and direction for innovative, strategic policy that is in line with agency directions and plans designed to meet Government objectives.

3.4 Key Accountabilities*

A high level description of the outcomes the role is expected to deliver. 'Key Accountabilities' are not a list of tasks to be completed by the employee assigned to the role.

The 'Key Accountabilities' section is not intended to describe every aspect of what a role undertakes. It should focus on the most critical and important aspects of the role.

As a guide there should be no more than 6-8 'Key Accountabilities' in total.

'Key Accountabilities' should be:

- outcome focused, rather than process focused
- ordered according to what is most important/critical for the success of the role
- as specific to the role as possible while not detailing tasks.

Examples:

Systems Administrator role

- *Proactively identify business risks and opportunities to continually improve efficiency and effectiveness.*

Policy Officer role

- *Prepare advice, discussion papers, briefs and submissions to contribute to the development of policies and initiatives.*

Executive Officer role

- *Prepare and coordinate strategic advice, research, information and reports on diverse and complex policy, planning and operational matters to support executive decision making.*

Executive role

- *Develop, coordinate and deliver the legislation program for the portfolio and lead the development and delivery of sound policies that ensure investment in NSW over both the short and long term and positive outcomes for the economy and the community.*

Generally, a role's relationships should be detailed in the 'Key Relationships' section of the Role Description. Where specific relationships are included in the 'Key Accountabilities' section the focus should be on the outcome delivered through that relationship – for example, leading a team to deliver particular organisational outcomes.

3.5 Key Challenges*

A summary of the role's 'Key Challenges', indicating the complexity of the role. 'Key Challenges' inform job evaluation and are an important consideration when selecting the capability levels required for the role.

The 'Key Challenges' listed should be those that are regularly encountered in the role, as opposed to intermittent challenges that may arise. The 'Key Challenges' should not restate the role's 'Key Accountabilities', and should describe the complexities the role is expected to manage, rather than business as usual activities.

This section should contain the 2-3 'Key Challenges' for the role. Note that the number of 'Key Challenges' does not need to match the number of 'Key Accountabilities'.

Examples:

Systems Administrator role

- Deal with a diverse range of projects requiring strategic advice or quality assurance within tight timeframes.

Policy Officer role

- Contribute to policies that balance complex and multiple issues with sensitivity to relationships with stakeholders, and service delivery impacts

Executive Officer role

- Anticipate and understand contentious issues and assimilate information quickly

Executive role

- Support the Minister in the development of the reform agenda, while managing numerous matters with a high level of political interest and public visibility, including issues which are highly sensitive and frequently impact on the community, industry, the economy, environment, and local government.

3.6 Key Relationships*

The key stakeholders and customers the role is expected to interact with routinely, rather than periodically. These relationships are important for understanding the nature of the interpersonal skills required to successfully perform the role.

Relationships with both internal (within the Department/Agency) and external (outside the Department/Agency) stakeholders should be included where relevant. All roles require interaction with internal stakeholders, however some roles may not interact with external stakeholders. As a minimum, a role will have an internal relationship with its Manager and its Work Team.

A role's relationship with its manager and direct reports (where relevant) is an important aspect of performance development. Aspects such as providing and receiving continuous feedback and ensuring ongoing communication should be reflected in the 'Key Relationships' section.

A small group of Public Service Senior Executives also have relationships at the Ministerial level. These relationships should also be described in the Role Description. Most public sector roles do not involve relationships at the Ministerial level, and this section of the Role Description template is therefore optional.

Examples:

Human Resources Consultant

Who (i.e. who is the relationship with)	Why (i.e. purpose of the relationship)
Internal*	
Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Escalate issues, keep informed, advise and receive instructions. *Provide regular updates on key Human Resources projects, issues and priorities.
Portfolio Directors and Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provide expert advice, assistance and support in Human Resources services.
People and Culture team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Ensure an integrated organisation approach to cross-portfolio initiatives.
Agency Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provide consulting services that support organisational objectives and employee performance/development.
Work Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provide direction and manage performance. *Review work and proposals of team members. *Obtain the work group perspective and share information.
External	
Employee Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Carry out consultation, liaison and negotiation.
Industry professionals/Consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Seek/maintain specialist knowledge/advice and collaborate on the implementation of organisation strategies, to keep abreast of best practice in Human Resource Management.

Project Manager ICT

Who (i.e. who is the relationship with)	Why (i.e. purpose of the relationship)
Internal*	
Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Escalate issues, keep informed, advise and receive instructions. *Participate in meetings to represent work group perspective and share information. *Participate in discussions and decisions regarding implementation of innovation and best practice.
Work team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provide direction and manage performance.
External	
Vendors/service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Manage contracts and monitor provision of service to ensure compliance with contracts and service agreements. *Provide and gather information and resolve routine issues.

3.7 Role Dimensions

Information about where the role sits in the organisation including, as relevant:

- **Decision Making**

Decision making responsibilities of the role and more formal delegations under an Act and/or departmental policy.

- **Reporting Line**

Who the role reports to.

- **Direct Reports**

The number of direct reports to the role. Role titles and role classification/grade/band may be included in this section. Indirect and/or dotted line reporting arrangements should also be included. If there are no direct reports, 'nil' should be recorded against this section to provide clarity for evaluators and applicants.

- **Budget**

Size of budget and/or expenditure. If there is no budget/expenditure for the role, 'nil' should be recorded against this section to provide clarity for evaluators and applicants.

Some or all of the above may change over time.

Details should be kept to the minimum level required for job evaluation and applicant information purposes.

3.8 Essential Requirements

Essential role requirements may include:

- qualifications or certifications (where necessary to practice)
- employment screening checks (such as a Criminal Record Check or Working with Children Check)
- licencing/registration requirements
- security and other clearances
- health assessments and fitness requirements
- whether the role is identified (e.g. *Aboriginal identified roles: Aboriginality is an essential requirement and typically all or the majority of the work of an Aboriginal identified role will involve the development and/or delivery of policy, programs and services which impact on Aboriginal people and/or involve liaising directly with Aboriginal people and communities*)
- knowledge and/or experience requirements.

Knowledge and experience are different to qualifications or certifications required to practice and should only be included in the Role Description where they:

- are critical for successful performance in the role, and
- cannot be met by transferable capabilities demonstrated in other roles, and
- cannot be developed 'on the job' within a reasonable period of time.

To avoid unnecessarily limiting the field of potential candidates for the role or inhibiting employee mobility, careful consideration should be given to whether knowledge and/or experience requirements are essential for the role. The behavioural indicators against each of the capability levels selected for the role should also be carefully reviewed to determine whether knowledge and/or experience requirements need to be included. The behavioural indicators describe the degree of complexity and the scope of activity expected at each level, and these in turn imply the level of prior experience and/or knowledge required.

Where knowledge and/or experience requirements are included in the 'Essential Requirements' section, they should be expressed as broadly and generically as possible.

Although some professions require experience described in a specific length of time (as prescribed by the relevant professional body), it is generally more useful to express the knowledge and/or experience requirements of the role in one or more of the following ways:

Depth
Depth of experience which denotes a high degree of specialised expertise or knowledge in a particular discipline

Examples:
Principal Auditor - Extensive knowledge and experience in the conduct of technical compliance audits gained through substantial audit practice.

Senior Employee Relations Advisor - Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the evolution of employment law, legislation and the industrial framework.

Breadth

Breadth of experience which characterises generalist roles often in leadership, management or senior professional roles across a number of streams

Examples:

HR Business Partner - Experience in delivery of integrated advice and services across a full range of HR programs.

Senior Project Engineer - Experience in delivery of high quality buildings and infrastructure compliant with specifications, quality, safety and environmental standards, time and budget constraints, legislative requirements, grant conditions and client expectations.

Context

Experience gained within a particular context or specialised industry setting

Examples:

Senior Business Analyst, ICT - Currency of knowledge and familiarity with web enabled consumer service delivery and eCommerce applications.

Client Services Manager - Understanding of appropriate strategies for, and experience in managing delivery of advice and information services to clients impacted by a range of physical and/or intellectual disabilities.

The ‘Essential Requirements’ section is not to be used to place “selection criteria” from previous position descriptions. Essential requirements are those without which an applicant could not undertake the role. This section should therefore not include “desirable” criteria or experience.

If there are no ‘Essential Requirements’ for the role, this section should be deleted from the final Role Description.

3.9 Capabilities for the Role*

The capabilities (i.e. the knowledge, skills and abilities) for the role are obtained from the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework (Capability Framework) and any relevant occupation specific capability sets.

NSW Public Sector Capabilities

All 16 core capabilities in the Capability Framework (i.e. in the ‘Personal Attributes’, ‘Relationships’, ‘Results’ and ‘Business Enablers’ groups) apply to all public sector roles, across all classifications/grades/bands and all occupations.

In addition, four ‘People Management’ capabilities apply to all public sector employees in roles responsible for managing others.

Occupation/profession specific capabilities

The Capability Framework is designed to work in conjunction with occupation/profession specific capability sets to provide a comprehensive description of the knowledge, skills and abilities required for roles in specific occupations.

Many Departments/Agencies have occupation specific capability frameworks for particular groups of roles.

The PSC is working with the sector to develop and implement occupation specific capability sets for occupations that are common in the sector and where functional capability building has been identified as a critical need.

Where occupation specific capabilities exist, they should be included in the Role Description in addition to the capabilities taken from the Capability Framework.

Generally no more than one occupation specific capability set should apply to a role. If a number of capability sets could apply, then the role may not require an occupation specific capability set.

Capability Summary*

All 16 core capabilities (20 for roles responsible for managing others) from the Capability Framework are listed in the capability summary for the role, together with their required level.

In addition, the capabilities from an occupation specific capability set, if relevant to the role, are included in the capability summary.

All 16 core capabilities (20 for roles responsible for managing others) and their levels are contained in the capability summary.

If the role requires occupation/profession specific capabilities these should also be included in the summary table.

Capability Levels*

The level of each capability (identified from the Capability Framework and any relevant occupation specific capability set) should be identified based on the role's:

- Primary Purpose
- Key Accountabilities
- Key Challenges, and
- Key Relationships.

The capability levels are unlikely to change unless these aspects of the role change.

Consider where the role is situated in the organisational hierarchy when determining the level of capability. For example an entry level role would not be assigned a capability at Highly Advanced level, and a senior role such as an Executive Director would not be assigned a capability at Foundational level.

Roles are unlikely to require all capabilities at the same level. The spread of capability levels selected for a role from the Capability Framework should not generally exceed three consecutive levels. Roles at the lower and higher ends of the organisational hierarchy may only need capabilities across two consecutive levels.

Focus Capabilities*

The Focus Capabilities are those for which an employee assigned to the role must demonstrate immediate competence, that is, from day one of engagement.

The Focus Capabilities appear in **bold** in the Capability Summary within the Role Description.

Note: an exception to this requirement is where a person is moved temporarily to a role for a development opportunity. Developmental temporary assignments and secondments are a way to provide opportunities for employees to develop particular skills. In these situations, the employee may not meet all the required role capabilities on day one in the temporary assignment or seconded role.

These capabilities should be included in the employee's performance development plan. The employee and manager should work together to ensure development of the capabilities at the level required for the role is achieved within a six month period.

The Focus Capabilities are identified from both the Capability Framework and any relevant occupation specific capability set.

Where a capability is identified as a Focus Capability, the capability, its level and behavioural indicators/ descriptors are included in full in the Role Description.

Determining the Focus Capabilities

When determining the Focus Capabilities for a role, the following criteria should be applied:

1. A minimum of four and a maximum of 10 Focus Capabilities should apply to a role. If the role contains People Management capabilities, a minimum of 5 Focus Capabilities should apply.
2. At least one Focus Capability from each Capability Group should be included. That is, from the 'Personal Attributes', 'Relationships', 'Results' and 'Business Enablers' groups.
3. Where a role is required to manage people, at least one Focus Capability from the 'People Management' group should be included.
4. More than one Focus Capability can be selected from each group.
5. The total number of Focus Capabilities for a role includes any occupation specific capabilities, where relevant to the role.
6. The Focus Capability in each capability group does not need to be the capability with the highest level.

The Focus Capabilities for a role may change over time. For instance, where:

- organisational or work unit priorities have changed, or
- capability strengths and gaps in the existing workforce have changed.

A Capability Comparison Guide has been developed by the Public Service Commission in partnership with the sector. It provides an indication of the number of capabilities (as a range) at each capability level by Clerk Grade/Public Service Senior Executive Band, and an outline of the number of Focus Capabilities (as a range) by Clerk Grade/Public Service Senior Executive (this range would include any occupation specific capabilities where relevant to the role).

The Capability Comparison guide is available at www.psc.nsw.gov.au/Sector-Support/Capability-Framework/Tools-and-Resources

Determining the capabilities and levels for the role from the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework

1 Determine the levels for all capabilities from the Capability Framework

- Review the role's 'Primary Purpose', 'Key Accountabilities', 'Key Challenges' and 'Key Relationships'
- Review the Capability Framework and the capabilities in the 'Personal Attributes', 'Relationships', 'Results' and 'Business Enablers' groups. Additionally, if the role manages people, review the 'People Management' capabilities
- Review the behavioural indicators across the five levels for each capability
- Determine the most appropriate level, based on the requirements of the role.

2 Determine if occupation specific capabilities are required

- Determine if any occupation specific capabilities apply to the role:
 - refer to the Department/Agency HR area for advice on agency specific capability sets
 - review the PSC website: www.psc.nsw.gov.au/CapabilityFramework for sector wide occupation specific capability sets
- Select the occupation specific capabilities required for the role.

3 Determine the 'Focus Capabilities'

- Identify which capabilities (from the Capability Framework and any relevant occupation specific capability set) an employee assigned to the role would need to demonstrate on day one of the engagement. These are the Focus Capabilities
- At least one Focus Capability must be chosen from each of the 'Personal Attributes', 'Relationships', 'Results' and 'Business Enablers' groups from the Capability Framework. Additionally, one must be chosen from the 'People Management' group if relevant for the role
- **Note:** The total number of Focus Capabilities for a role may include occupation specific capabilities. Refer to the Capability Comparison Guide to ensure consistency in the selection of Capability levels and Focus Capabilities.