

## Resource for Job Descriptions

The source for this information is Susan Beaumont, who worked with the Alban Institute and is now a consultant who writes articles and books and presents workshops around the country. She has authored books focusing on the dynamics of large congregations: “When Moses Meets Aaron” and “Inside the Large Congregation”. However, providing job descriptions and clear expectations for paid staff and volunteers is equally vital in smaller congregations.

### Why bother with job descriptions?

A job description defines the functions, responsibilities and core competencies of a job  
It outlines the relationships between partners in mutual ministry  
It gets the right person in the right position  
It allows you to evaluate performance against standards in the job description  
It’s a tool for staff and volunteer development  
It provides for continuity in a role when people change positions  
It establishes boundaries between roles (where does my job end and yours begin?)  
It establishes legal defensibility for hiring and firing

A job description is a living document, a container for dialogue, a tool for building shared expectations. It applies to paid and unpaid positions.

### Components of a job description

Title  
Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) status. Is the position Exempt or non-exempt?  
Status: full time, part time, temporary, volunteer  
Reports to:  
Job summary  
Essential functions, duties that define the job  
Qualifications  
Physical requirements and working conditions  
Core competencies—knowledge, skills, behaviors, results  
Effective date

The Fair Labor Standards Act was passed in 1938 to restrict child labor and establish minimum wage, establish the 40-hour work week, with time and a half pay for overtime. It is enforced by the Department of Labor.

Exempt employees: those in managerial positions, those who direct the work of 2 or more workers, those who do special or technical work, who have authority to hire or fire other workers, who regularly exercise discretionary powers; who receive a salary of not less than \$455/week.

Visit [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov) for more information.

Americans with Disabilities Act, enacted 1990, anti-discrimination law. Applies to any congregation with 15 or more employees, enforced by Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

*Any employer must make reasonable accommodations to employ a qualified person who can perform the essential functions of the job, unless those accommodations would impose an undue hardship on the employer.*

*Example: A blind person applies for a job as church bus driver. Does the church have to hire someone else to drive as a reasonable accommodation? No. Applicant clearly not able to perform essential functions of the job.*

*Example: A woman with hearing impairment applies for a job as church secretary. She needs a phone on which she can adjust the volume. Providing this equipment is a reasonable accommodation.*

## **Performance Expectations**

Why is this important?

In the church, we are in covenant relationships, a function of community and mutuality.

Failures in performance look like broken relationships and lead to isolation.

Accountability requires: Stating expectations clearly

Honoring the covenant

Pathways to reconciliation when the covenant is broken

## **Defining Essential Functions**

These are the tasks, the WHAT of the job. They are essential if the position exists to perform the function, if a limited number of people can perform the function, if the person needs special ability to perform it. i.e., music director, keyboard person or organist, Sunday School teacher, church secretary, custodian

To determine essential functions, begin by brainstorming the tasks required to perform a role. Each function begins with a verb.

For a full-time position, there should be no more than 8-12 essential functions.

Part-time or volunteer positions require fewer essential functions.

In the final description, list requirements and functions in the order of importance.

Here are samples of verbs that may describe essential functions:

Plans and organizes	Strengthens	Serves	Manages
Directs	Repairs	Supervises	Evaluates
Communicates	Shepherds	Implements	Maintains
Coordinates	Processes	Resources	Advises
Controls	Schedules	Trains	Nurtures
Problem solves	Provides	Assists	Initiates
Designs	Equips	Guides	Participates

Examples for church secretary or administrator:

- Provides administrative and clerical support for professional staff
- Participates in all staff meetings
- Maintains the congregation's data base

Examples for church custodian:

- Maintains a regular schedule of cleaning spaces, kitchen surfaces, floors and carpets.
- Operates cleaning equipment (vacuum cleaner, floor buffer, snow blower, lawn mower)
- Arranges spaces in preparation for meetings and church events
- Observes and responds to basic maintenance needs (changes light bulbs, etc)
- Inventories and communicates supply needs

### **Core Competencies**

These are behaviors, attributes, skills expected as a person executes essential functions of their role, the WHO and HOW of the job.

Categories of core competencies:

**Personal Competencies** include attention to detail, aesthetic awareness, creativity and innovation, compassion and care, ethics and values, influencing others, initiative, integrity and trust, interpersonal skills, listening, ownership of mission, resilience, self-development, self-differentiation, technical skill, time management, verbal and/or written communication (see detailed descriptions below)

*Samples of Personal Competencies*

*Attention to Detail: attends to many small pieces required for assembly into an organized whole; follows up on missing or unclear items; resolves unanswered questions when addressing a problem; keeps the larger picture in mind while addressing the smallest details*

*Aesthetic awareness: aware of effective organization of space for a variety of purposes; values cleanliness and orderliness of space; appreciates sacred space and knows how to physically care for it*

*Creativity and innovation: generates new ideas; creates a fresh approach by making new connections among existing ideas; learns from mistakes; has good judgment about which ideas are likely to work; willing to take acceptable risks in pursuit of innovation*

*Compassion and care: communicates care for the well-being of others; communicates support by his or her presence; expressions of care demonstrate appropriate boundaries*

*Ethics and values: honors the organization's core values and beliefs in her/his behavior; practices behaviors he/she advocates to others; maintains behavioral values in both non-stressful and stressful situations*

*Influencing others: encourages others to cooperate, participate, offer resources and make decisions in service to the work at hand; communicates respect for others verbally and non-verbally; creates an environment that invites constructive participation and commitment to a task or idea*

*Informing others: provides information so people are able to do their jobs effectively; communicates how information is relevant to the task at hand; shares information in a timely and transparent way*

*Initiative: enjoys working hard; seizes opportunities; takes calculated risks; active and energetic about worthwhile activities; sets challenging, but achievable objectives for self and others*

*Integrity and trust: seen as trustworthy by others; direct, honest, transparent in communication; keeps confidences; admits mistakes; doesn't operate with hidden agendas; consistent and reliable in responses*

*Interpersonal skills: establishes good working relationships with those involved in the completion of tasks; works well with people at all levels in the congregation; build rapport; uses diplomacy and tact; is approachable; considers the impact of her/his actions on others; avoids communication triangles*

*Listening: listens thoughtfully and attentively; observes congruence between spoken and non-verbal communication; overcomes personal bias to hear another's ideas or concerns; can describe the perspective of someone with whom he/she disagrees*

*Mission ownership: understands and supports the mission, vision, values and beliefs of the congregation; demonstrates those values to others; consistently behaves in ways that are congruent with the mission, vision, values and beliefs of the congregation*

*Resilience: copes well with change and uncertainty; shifts gears comfortably; decides and acts without having the total picture; handles acceptable risks comfortably; flexible*

*Self-development: sets personal work objectives, measures own progress, identifies gaps in knowledge, understanding and skill; seeks to develop skills; seeks regular feedback about performance; knows personal strengths and weaknesses; adapts to changing personal and organizational requirements*

*Self-differentiation: demonstrates appropriate personal boundaries in relationships; demonstrates confidence, without being egotistical; emotionally mature; maintains non-anxious presence in the midst of turmoil; builds a strong personal support system*

*Technical expertise: acquires technical skills to execute essential functions of the job; identifies which skills are lacking and seeks to develop those skills; continuously seeks mastery of technical proficiency*

*Time management: focuses time on tasks that contribute to organizational goals; uses time efficiency; respects the time of others; sets and acts on priorities; balances shifting priorities*

*Verbal communication: delivers a message clearly and with appropriate emotion in a variety of settings; adjusts communication style to the situation; adjusts the message, depending on circumstances and listeners*

*Written communication: writes clearly and succinctly; uses correct grammar, punctuation and speech patterns; delivers a message in a tone that matches the context*

**Organizational Competencies** include conflict management, decision-making and problem-solving, knowledge of the organization, managing projects, negotiation, setting priorities, team orientation

**Supervisory Competencies** include ability to delegate, developing others, hiring and staffing, motivating others, supervising work, team-building

**Managerial Competencies** include managing change, managing diverse people, fund-raising, leadership development, volunteer management, process management, strategic management, vision and purpose management

**Pastoral/Program Competencies** include hospitality, spiritual maturity, preaching, teaching, worship leadership, stewardship, social witness, pastoral care/counseling, visitation, spiritual formation/discipleship, evangelism/witness, membership development

Sample job description:

Title: **Church secretary**

Reports to: Pastor

Status: Part-time

Fair Labor Standards Act: Depends on hours and compensation

### **Job Summary**

The church secretary assists the congregation in fulfilling God's mission by providing clerical and administrative support to the pastor, staff and lay leaders.

### **Essential functions**

1. Produces bulletins and/or Power Point presentations for Sunday worship and special services
2. Monitors and publicizes schedule of volunteer worship assistants
3. Maintains congregational data base
4. Publishes monthly newsletter and other letters/communications as needed
5. Operates office equipment and monitors maintenance requirements
6. Orders office and church supplies as needed
7. Organizes congregational records and files for easy access and retrieval
8. Organizes and maintains church bulletin/communication boards

**May add:** Minimum qualifications for education and experience

**May add:** Physical requirements

### **Core competencies**

1. Attention to detail: attends to many small pieces that must be assembled into an organized whole; accurate in keeping records and producing bulletins and publications
2. Compassion and care: demonstrates care for others while maintaining a strong sense of boundaries
3. Integrity and trust: keeps confidences, trustworthy, responds to situations calmly and reliably
4. Resilience: copes with change and uncertainty, shifts gears comfortably
5. Time management: uses time efficiently and effectively
6. Organizational knowledge: knows how to get things done through formal and informal decision-making channels
7. Team orientation: understands and supports the importance of teamwork
8. Helping orientation: shows concern for members, friends, and visitors to the congregation; works to supply answers and resources when needed

Sample job description:

Title: **Sunday School Superintendent**

Reports to: Pastor

Status: Volunteer

Fair Labor Standards Act: Exempt

### **Job Summary**

The Sunday School Superintendent guides and supports the church's mission to educate and nurture children in faith.

### **Essential functions**

1. In consultation with the pastor and Christian Education team, chooses curriculum for the Sunday School program
2. Recruits Sunday School teachers, substitutes and support staff
3. Communicates regularly and openly with pastor(s), teachers and staff regarding scheduling, needs and problems in the Sunday School
4. Provides training for Sunday School teachers as needed
5. Adjusts curriculum and environment for special needs children
6. Orders and organizes supplies for Sunday School

**May add:** Minimum qualifications for education and experience

**May add:** Physical requirements

### **Core competencies**

1. Mission ownership: demonstrates understanding and full support of the mission, vision, values and beliefs of the congregation
2. Interpersonal skills: engages people positively, holds others accountable in a spirit of love; demonstrates ability to listen actively and accept criticism
3. Leadership skills: demonstrates ability to lead others, productively engages and resolves conflict
4. Problem solving: identifies and solves common problems; regularly assesses classroom interactions and assists in redirecting dysfunctional into functional behavior
5. Management skills: Delegates, supports and holds teachers accountable; copes with change and uncertainty; gathers resources (people, funds, material, support) to get things done; reinforces the vision, direction and goals of the educational program