

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING
MINISTRY PERSONNEL POSITION
DESCRIPTIONS FOR LOCAL MINISTRIES
(congregations, pastoral charges, missions, outreach ministries)

FOR USE IN LONDON CONFERENCE DURING THE TESTING
PERIOD OF MAY 2013 TO AUGUST 2015

PURPOSE OF THESE GUIDELINES:

These guidelines were developed to support Local Ministries* to develop effective and accurate position descriptions for Ministry Personnel.** These guidelines differ from those issued in 2003 by the General Council office (MEPS 446) as these guidelines were developed specifically to address changes in the pastoral relations process that are being tested in London and Toronto Conferences between May 2013 and August 2015.

* For the purpose of this document, “Local Ministry” refers to a multi-point or single point pastoral charge, a community ministry or any other type of ministry served by a person recognized as “Ministry Personnel” within the United Church of Canada.

** Also for the purpose of this document, “Ministry Personnel” refers to Diaconal, Ordained, Designated Lay Ministers, Ordained/Diaconal Supply, Candidate Supply, Student Supply, Minister in Training (Native Ministry) and Intern Supply.

WHO USES THESE GUIDELINES:

These guidelines can be used by the Church Board or Council to work with others in the Local Ministry to prepare a position description either for an upcoming vacancy or for a new ministry position(s).

WHEN TO USE THESE GUIDELINES:

An approved Position Description is one of the prerequisites to having a vacancy declared. (Please refer to the “Local Ministry Confirmation” form for other prerequisites.)

It should be completed by referring to the up-to-date Ministry and Mission Priorities Profile. It is sent with the Local Ministry Confirmation form to Presbytery Secretary as to request that a vacancy be declared.

CAN THESE GUIDELINES BE USED FOR NON-MINISTRY PERSONNEL:

These guidelines were developed for those falling within the designation of “Ministry Personnel” as defined above. They may, however, be somewhat helpful when developing or revising other positions descriptions (e.g. administrative assistant, music leadership, congregational designated minister, custodial staff etc.)

WHAT IS A POSITION DESCRIPTION:

An effective and accurate position description provides an organized summary of the duties, tasks, responsibilities and accountability of the position as well as the knowledge, skills and abilities required for competent fulfillment of the position.

WHY BOTHER WITH A POSITION DESCRIPTION:

An effective and accurate position description will be used by a number of different people and groups for different reasons:

When initiating a call or appointment process:

- Ministry Personnel will refer to it to determine if they wish to apply for the position;
- Interview Teams will use it as the basis for defining interview questions and evaluating the responses of potential applicants;
- Both will use it as the basis for negotiating the terms of a call or appointment.

When establishing the relationship between new Ministry Personnel and Local Ministry:

- Ministry and Personnel Committee and Ministry Personnel will review it together to ensure each is “on the same page” in terms of expectations of the Ministry Personnel;
- Ministry and Personnel Committee and Council/Board of the Local Ministry will use it as an educational tool for members and adherents of the Local Ministry to support the development of realistic expectations of the Ministry Personnel.

When supporting the ongoing relationship between Ministry Personnel and Local Ministry:

- Ministry and Personnel Committee and Ministry Personnel will use it
 - To assess and formally recognize areas of strength and development for both the Ministry Personnel and the Local Ministry itself
 - To assess and adjust work balance among multiple Ministry Personnel;
 - To examine the position as it changes over time

In other words, the Position Description is an important and useful tool when done well.

Why? Because it shows that the Local Ministry has carefully assessed the need for the position and what the expectations are for the person in the new position.

Taking time in the beginning means fewer chances of miscommunication and unrealistic expectations after the Ministry Personnel is called or appointed.

WHEN TO LOOK AT A POSITION DESCRIPTION:

1. For new ministry personnel positions:

This is done before an advertisement is placed or any potential applicants are interviewed. A position description is a prerequisite to having a vacancy declared by presbytery.

2. For existing ministry personnel position descriptions that will change as a result of a new ministry personnel position (e.g. team ministry, change in administrative responsibilities that will impact etc.) Revised Position Descriptions for Ministry Personnel must also be reviewed and approved by presbytery

3. For existing Ministry Personnel Position Descriptions when the incumbent is staying in the call/appointment:
 - a. At time of annual review the Position Description should be reviewed to identify (and revise if appropriate) any areas of concern or change. Either the Ministry Personnel or the Ministry & Personnel Committee can identify potential revisions;
 - b. At time of establishing new Local Ministry and Mission Priorities that may have an impact on the Position Description.¹ For example: if the Local Ministry establishes a new priority that will require the Ministry Personnel to provide music for worship, or create the bulletin, or provide counseling to those struggling with addictions etc – each of these has both time and skill requirements that were not part of the original “terms of employment.” See footnote below.
 - c. Similarly, the Local Ministry Unit may assess that it is moving into a time of transition and re-evaluating their ministry on the basis of financial sustainability. You may decide that your ministry is going to ‘look different’- that is, perhaps amalgamating with another local ministry, or changing to part-time paid personnel or some other significant change. Any transition planning must include a thorough and prayerful review of the Position Description.

WHO SHOULD DEVELOP AND REVIEW POSITION DESCRIPTIONS?

The Governing Body, whether a board/council or other approved structure, is responsible for developing and approving the Position Description. The Governing body may delegate the development of the position description to a working group but it cannot delegate the approval of same.

Members of the governing body may have the right gifts, skills and interests, or may need/choose to look to the broader constituency. Be sure to use the skills and gifts that are available to you. If you don't have these skills and gifts within your congregation, ask the Conference Personnel Ministry to help and/or to refer you to others who may have these skills to share.

¹ Note: Whenever significant changes are made to the Position Description especially regarding the “terms of employment” (e.g.. changes in hours, scheduling expectations, new skills requirements etc. these must be negotiated and agreed to by both the Ministry Personnel, the Local Ministry Unit and the Presbytery. If you are unsure, consult the Conference Personnel Minister.) Refer to *The Manual*, current version, Section 46.1 referring to changes in terms that could be understood or perceived to be- “to the detriment of either – this always involves the presbytery and formal congregational meetings.

WHO IS ASKED FOR INPUT?

- The Ministry Personnel already in the position (if being revised). You may want to provide them with an opportunity to provide written input and follow up with an interview. It can be helpful to have them record their activities over a couple of months prior to providing input as a way of assessing the current accuracy of the position description (see Appendix 1 for an approach to seeking input from incumbents.)
- Related committees or working groups who can provide accurate input. Use the existing position description as the basis. Emphasize that this is a review of the POSITION not of the PERSON in the position.
- For new Position Descriptions: consult with other Local Ministries or other denominations having similar Ministry Positions for input. See Appendix 2 for outline of how to seek input regarding new position descriptions. Input from the current Ministry Personnel is likely to be quite useful also.

WHAT DO WE INCLUDE IN A POSITION DESCRIPTION?

The outline provided here is a Position Description template that has all the necessary components as well as the eight categories used in the “Local Ministry and Mission Priorities” form. Follow it carefully and incorporate the input received and you are well on your way. You will find a blank form of this Position Description in Appendix 2 or as a separate form on the website. Use either to complete your first draft.

Position Title:

Position Profile: Full-time Part-time If Part-time, hours/week _____
 Solo Team ministry If Team, # of other Ministry Personnel: ____

Position Summary: (2-4 sentences that summarize the position)

Accountable to: (who does this person ‘report to’ in terms of accountability for fulfilling their duties?)

To Whom	For What Purpose/Tasks	Name/Contact
Local Ministry through the Ministry and Personnel Committee	For the local support and accountability related to this position description	
Presbytery	For support and collegiality.	
Conference	For oversight and discipline.	London Conference Executive

Autonomy in Decision-Making: Indicate here the general types of decisions that the Ministry Personnel will make independently (without consulting others) and the types of decisions that require consultation (and with whom). This list does not need to be exhaustive but should definitely indicate what types and amounts of expenditures can be authorized by the Ministry Personnel. For example: can the ministry personnel make financial decisions independently about office expenditures? If yes, up to what amount? About benevolent gifts to those in need? If yes, up to what amount and from what account? Who makes decisions about liturgy, prayers and music in worship – the Ministry Personnel? The Music Director? The Session/Worship Committee? Etc.

Principal Areas of Responsibility and Associated Duties:

General Instructions:

1. Use only the categories that apply. The Principal Areas are also the categories used in the Local Ministry Mission Priority Form. There may be categories that don't apply to this position.
2. Use your Annual Review of Ministry and Mission Priorities Form. It should guide how you complete these categories.
3. Order: Generally, the "Principal Areas" are placed in the order that best reflects your priorities and the amount of time, energy and skill that is required to fulfill them. They are placed here in alphabetical order for simplicity only.
4. For each Principal Area, define the duties that are associated with the area. As much as possible, indicate the frequency of the duties (e.g. daily, weekly, monthly, occasionally, yearly, as needed). BE HONEST. Don't say something is "as needed" when you really mean "daily."
5. Start by being really specific and including EVERYTHING including the kitchen sink. Then go back and delete the things that don't really belong. The Position Description (in most cases) shouldn't be less than 3 pages and no more than 5 pages.

Discipleship: Different ministries use different words to describe this category. Choose the words that best reflect your own local ministry's approach. For example: Christian education for children and youth, adult education, small group ministry, faith formation, spiritual practices etc. Be clear about age groups, expectations about specific activities (e.g. March Break and Professional Development Day Camps for school-aged kids etc.)

Justice and Outreach: Different ministries again use different words to describe this category. Some refer to it as "activities that reach beyond our doors." Other may use "Needs-oriented outreach" while others may describe it more specifically: environmental justice activities, poverty and justice activities, global justice, Food Sustainability. If you have very specific activities that are related to this Ministry Position Description, make sure you include it here (for example, if you expect them to be a member of the board of a local organization as part of your outreach, name this here.)

Leadership: This category describes two important aspects of leadership:

- The ways in which you expect the Ministry Personnel to lead (just a few examples- think carefully and honestly about the type of leader that best suits the personality and needs of your local ministry:
 - “Provides strong charismatic leadership and provides direction to others”
 - “Leads ‘from behind’ – motivates, encourages and supports others to share their own gifts for ministry”
 - “Highly personable approach to leadership i.e. builds relationship and consensus, delegates and shares leadership appropriately.”
 - “Leader who is not afraid to take risks, try new things and learn through both successes and mistakes.”
 - BE REALISTIC: No one can be all of these things. Be clear about what you most need. BE HONEST. Describe the leadership traits you need NOT the ones you wish you needed.
- Any specific duties associated with leadership. (e.g. if the Ministry Personnel is going to provide “supervision” or coordination for a staff team such as a “Lead Minister” or “Coordinating Minister”, or speak publically on behalf of the Local Ministry, if s/he is going to train and mentor a Lay Pastoral Care Team as the “Pastoral Care Minister” etc.)

Ministry Partnerships: This category describes the partnerships you expect the Ministry Personnel to be involved in – Some of these are non-negotiable. For example, clergy need to establish collegial relationship within local communities and their presbytery and contribute to the ongoing work and life of the wider church. They must attend and participate in presbytery and as appropriate, conference and national church activities. This category should also identify the community partnerships that you expect your Ministry Personnel to engage in: for example, there may be health and social service agencies with whom your local ministry collaborates, tenants within your building or outreach ministry collaborations. This category should identify these and the type of participation that you expect (e.g. attending meetings versus leading an inter-agency partnership).

Pastoral/Spiritual Care: This category describes your expectations in terms of visiting and supporting people spiritually. Describe “who” this care is provided to-just members and adherents? Other members of the community who seek it? Are there specific skills that the person in this Ministry Position requires? E.g. must have credentials for counselling (not only “pastoral care”) or a certain number of Clinical Pastoral Education units– or special skills in addictions, mental health, palliative/end-of-life care, children’s counselling etc.

Personal Spirituality and Self Care: Taking care of oneself in ministry is vital to the individual being able to sustain her/himself over the long term while fulfilling the expectations. Describe here what you expect in terms of their own spiritual development and care, as well as how they will demonstrate a commitment to balance in their vocation and personal life through hobbies, sports, and other non-ministry related activities. You may NOT have an expectation of “good health” or anything else that may be seen as discriminatory against persons with any kind of disability.

Stewardship: This category includes being good stewards of people's gifts and time, money and investments, as well as the physical assets of the local ministry including such property and buildings. What involvement do you expect the Ministry Personnel to have in this area? To what extent do you rely on the skills of the Ministry Personnel to read and interpret budgets, to promote and lead stewardship education and to support stewardship initiatives?

Worship: In this category, you describe your expectations for worship. In your local ministry, worship may take several forms. If so, make sure to clarify the expectations for each of the worship opportunities you offer. Or, if your Local Ministry Priority is to develop a number of worship alternatives beyond your existing worship locations and times, clarify what the expected worship sites (including frequency, location, duration and 'tone') will be for this Position Description. For example, if the Ministry Personnel will be expected to lead a traditional Sunday morning worship service in two congregations at two different site as well as develop, implement and lead a contemporary mid-week service aimed primarily at young families, this should be well spelled-out in this category.

Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities: This section identifies the absolute requirements of the position (not the "nice to have's but not essential.") Include here level of education, any certifications or police checks that are required, drivers' license and access to car (if required), areas of specialization if any, technological expertise (if required).

Other "Preferred" Assets: This is where you can indicate skills or credentials or abilities that aren't required but that are "preferred." These may be areas that you help the Ministry Personnel to develop over time e.g. if this Ministry Position includes maintenance of a website, then website maintenance may be a "preferred skill," or if it involves working in a shelter or other type of outreach ministry, perhaps a preferred skill is "experience in scheduling volunteers." On the other hand, you may have no "preferred" assets or skills for the Ministry Position. That's OK, too.

DRAFT ONE DONE- NOW WHAT?

If the Position Description is more than five pages, go back and whittle it down.

Take it back to the incumbent (if there is one) and ask for his/her confirmation that it is accurate.

It's a good idea when the position description is new or being revised or just being reviewed (even with no changes) to record the date and the signatures of those who reviewed and/or revised it.

Take it to the approving body e.g. Board/Council.

Then when it's ready in its almost-final form, attach it to the Local Ministry Confirmation form in time for the next meeting of Presbytery (facilitated by the Pastoral Relations Committee.) Send it and request that a vacancy be declared.

Appendix 1: Seeking Input from a Person Currently in a Position

Seeking input from a person about their Position Description can sometimes be seen as quite intimidating. Unless you are really clear about your purpose, the person might think things like:

- Are they unhappy with my work? Are they trying to get rid of me?
- Are they planning to hire an additional person without involving me?
- What is motivating this? Has someone made a complaint?

To avoid provoking anxiety, be clear right from the beginning.

For example: “As you know, we worked together recently on the Local Ministry Mission Priorities. We revised some of our priorities from when you started and it will be good to sit down and take a look at the Position Description as it exists now to see what (if anything) needs to change. This is not a review of your performance. This is about the Position Description itself. Does that make sense to you? Do you have any concerns or questions about this process? What can I do to alleviate any concerns you may have?”

In other words- put yourself in the shoes of the Ministry Personnel so you imagine what might go through your head. Then do what you can to alleviate any concerns or anxiety.

Written Input: If there is more than one Ministry Personnel, each one should be given opportunity to comment on the various Position Descriptions (unless they have no interaction or overlapping responsibilities in which case it may not be useful or appropriate- use your judgment.)

1. Give Ministry Personnel enough time - no less than two weeks and ideally no more than two months- Schedule a time to meet to review their written input in advance and confirm who will do the interview. Generally the interview is conducted with the Ministry and Personnel Liaison (and possibly one other person) for the Position Description but confirm that this is appropriate (i.e. that the person is familiar enough with the position that they can understand and collect relevant information).
2. Ask the Ministry Personnel to look at their Position Description. Ask them for a few weeks or even a couple of months, to record each week how much time they are spending in each category. Record specific things they are doing that are not recorded in the Description as well as things that they aren't doing that ARE in the Description. Don't ask them to fill out another form. Just have them write all over a copy of the Position Description – use extra pages if they need to. Reinforce THIS IS NOT A PERFORMANCE REVIEW. You are asking them to conduct a review of the Position Description and to be honest and bold in their assessment.
3. Ask them to ponder and record:
 - a. What they like (or is working well) from the Position Description.
 - b. What they don't like (or isn't working well).
 - c. Suggestions they have to make it more accurate or to better align with the new priorities.
4. Any other questions or concerns about the Position Description review process.

Interview

1. Easing anxiety:
 - a. Meet in a confidential and comfortable place (i.e. not in the local coffee shop or in the church office if you are likely to be interrupted).
 - b. Schedule enough time so that neither person is rushed.
 - c. Start again with reinforcing that this is NOT a performance review. Tell her/him how the information will be used and what will be done with their specific feedback (e.g. shredded, no one will know what suggestions come from her/him etc.).
 - d. Remind him/her that s/he will be asked to review the next-to-final version before it goes to the Board/Council.
2. Conducting the Interview:
 - a. The “interviewer” is there primarily to listen and to record suggestions not to provide your comments.
 - b. Ask clarifying questions if the input is unclear.
 - c. Restate what you have heard to ensure that you have captured what the Ministry Personnel intended.
 - d. Take good notes.
3. Summarize what you’ve heard in terms of what is working well, what needs changing and any other concerns. Ask for any last comments.
4. Thank them for her/his time. Confirm what happens next.

Appendix 2: Position Description Template

Position Title:

Prepared by: _____ Date: _____

Position Summary:**Accountable to:**

To Whom	For What Purpose/Tasks	Name/Contact
Local Ministry through the Ministry and Personnel Committee Liaison	For the local support and accountability related to this position description	
Presbytery	For support and collegiality.	
Conference	For oversight and discipline.	

Autonomy in Decision-Making:**Principal Areas of Responsibility and Associated Duties:****Discipleship:****Justice and Outreach:****Leadership:****Ministry Partnerships:****Pastoral/Spiritual Care:**

Personal Spirituality and Self Care:

Stewardship:

Worship:

Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

Other “Preferred” Assets:

Date Position Description Reviewed:

Ministry and Personnel Representative:

Ministry Personnel: