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Building a Governor in Council Position Accountability Profile

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For more information, contact:

Privy Council Office

85 Sparks Street, Room 1000

Ottawa ON Canada K1A 0A3

info@pco-bcp.gc.ca

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Section One - Introduction

An Accountability Profile is a short and concise description of a position, presented in a structured manner, that contains all of the information necessary to evaluate the position against the Governor in Council Position Evaluation Plan. It also contains the basic information for staffing the position.

This manual outlines the steps for building an Accountability Profile. It is important that the Profile clearly and concisely describe the:

- nature and scope of the work to be performed,
- conditions under which the work is carried out, and
- core competencies required to achieve the results expected of the position.

With this information, a position is evaluated under three factors in the Governor in Council Position Evaluation Plan:

Knowledge and Skills

This factor measures the depth and fields of specialized knowledge and the skills required by the position to:

- achieve intended results that are associated with the mandate and mission of the organization,
- co-ordinate/manage/consider policy and operational issues and the diversity of the elements that must be brought into the decision making processes, and
- analyze, identify, define, evaluate, draw conclusions about and resolve issues, make decisions and exercise judgement.

Accountabilities and Obligations

This factor measures:

- the level of influence and the extent of the impact of the decisions made by the position,
- matters affecting the achievement of the organisation's mandate,
- the degree of ambiguity in the information available and/or the relationships that must be factored into concrete actions or decisions, and
- the opportunity for activity or thought and the time horizon that is affected by decisions and the degree of risk associated with these decisions.

Working Environment and Conditions

This factor measures work pressures, sensory attention and physical effort.

The Accountability Profile brings together critical factors that make up work: what needs to be done is linked with the core competencies that are required to successfully achieve the objectives and results established for the position. In this way, the work is viewed by the evaluator in a holistic manner. The Profile facilitates both the analysis and the evaluation of the work and the staffing of the position.

The core competencies describe those behaviours that must be demonstrated in achieving the results for which the position is accountable. The core competencies for GIC positions are:

- Conceptual/Innovative Thinking,
- Leadership,
- Flexibility,
- Impact and Influence, and
- Listening, Understanding and Responding.

Over time, work changes. This means that the Accountability Profile will have to be periodically updated. While there is no quick or easy route to writing a good Accountability Profile, this manual contains some approaches and tips that can assist the writer complete the task more easily and more effectively. The primary demand is clear thinking about the job. Once the accountabilities and the roles of the position have been clearly identified, it is usually less difficult to complete the Profile.

A quick checklist of the information the Profile should cover is included in Appendix A. A model Accountability Profile is included in Appendix B. A template for completing all the sections of the Accountability Profile, including a brief description of each section, is included in Appendix C.

Section Two - Building the Accountability Profile

Step One: Gathering the Job Information

First there is a need to gather information about:

- the major responsibilities of the job, including program or legislative responsibilities,
- the Key Result Areas involved in carrying out those responsibilities,
- where the job fits in the organizational unit,
- the dimensions of the job (in numerical terms),
- the major challenges of the job,
- the specific pressures and demands of the job,
- any special circumstances which may affect the job, and
- the behaviours that are demonstrated in meeting the challenges of the job.

Then there is a need to arrange this information under the headings of:

- Position Identification
- Primary Focus
- Specific Accountabilities
- Reporting Relationships
- Dimensions
- Challenges, Issues and Initiatives
- Working Environment and Conditions
- Core Competencies

Note: Careful preparation and organization will make the task easier. Appendix A provides a quick checklist of the questions that should be covered. It is important to focus on and select the highest levels of accountabilities and behaviours for inclusion in the Profile.

Step Two: Position Identification

The easiest place to begin is by filling in the identification information:

Position: The official title of the position.

Organization: The name of the agency, board or commission.

Location: The geographical location of the position.

Profile Date: The day, month and year the Accountability Profile is completed.

Step Three: Primary Focus

This section provides a brief but specific statement of **why the position exists**.

The statement should give the reader an immediate impression of the primary purpose for including the job in the organization. The statement should be one sentence in length and should clearly distinguish the fundamental orientation of the job.

It is important to concentrate on what the job is essentially accountable for.

For example, the Primary Focus statement for the Model Accountability Profile states that the Position:

Ensures the provision of professional advice and recommendations on how Canada can achieve the highest possible levels of employment, efficient production and a high and consistent rate of economic growth from which all Canadians can benefit.

Notice how the statement gives prominence to the result to be achieved, not on any specific duty or task. Short statements are much more effective in capturing the essential purpose of the job. Careful thought should always be given to the Primary Focus statement because it sets the context for the rest of the Profile.

Step Four: Specific Accountabilities

This section defines the critical end results expected of the jobholder.

The difference between this section and the Primary Focus section is that the latter describes why the job exists **in general**. This section **specifies** the important end results which must be accomplished (and implies how, and how well, those end results are to be achieved).

Notice that a Specific Accountability statement is not a listing of activities and duties, but rather a broad statement of **what the job is actually expected to accomplish**.

Notice, in the example drawn from the Specific Accountabilities of the Model Accountability Profile, the end to which all of the activities are directed is clearly stated. Notice how the first Specific Accountability is concerned with the intellectual leadership that the position provides for the organization:

Provides effective leadership to the Council in focusing the research agenda, in managing and conducting research, in scrutinizing and refining findings and in building a consensus across regional, political and economic lines on key issues, in order to develop conclusions and recommendations for policy.

Each statement should:

- start with an action verb,
- state an end result, and
- define the ways in which the end result is to be achieved or the means to be used.

Usually it takes a list of four to seven separate statements to cover a single job. Unfortunately, there is no simple rule for deciding how to split the job's accountabilities into separate statements.

The specific accountabilities of the job should be listed **in the order of their importance**, so as to provide a relative degree of emphasis for each.

Notice that the managerial leadership provided by the position is number six in the list of Specific Accountabilities for the Model Accountability Profile.

Assures the adequacy and continuity of the managerial and professional functioning of the Council by effective management of available resources and by anticipating future requirements.

This does not mean that the managerial leadership that is expected of the position is negligible, but that elements of the intellectual leadership that the position is called upon to demonstrate are more important. This is a position that is recognized primarily for the intellectual, rather than the managerial value-added.

Step Five: Reporting Relationships

This section identifies the Reporting Relationships of the position.

The position's location within the hierarchy is shown:

- who the position reports to; and
- subordinate staff as direct reports to the position.

Step Six: Dimensions

This section records the measurable areas upon which the position has either direct or indirect impact.

A number of items could be included in this area. For instance:

- the number of people supervised (measured in full time equivalents),
- the annual payroll of those supervised,
- the annual operating expenses of the organization,
- the cost of materials purchased or used (annually),
- various assets controlled or affected, and
- any other significant dollar or other values which are measurable on an annual basis.

The evaluation method does not put an inordinate emphasis on «numbers». However, figures should be provided for as many items as are appropriate (probably 2 to 4 items), in order to give the most complete picture of the job.

For example, in the Model Profile, the full-time equivalents, the operating budget of the organization, the gross domestic and the operating budget of the Canadian government are given as numeric indicators to reflect the scope of the position's impact.

Step Seven: Challenges, Issues and Initiatives

This section provides a clear, concise overview of two or three priority program elements of the job that represent a significant challenge for the incumbent, or the priority issues or initiatives that form part of these challenges.

The intent is to provide insights into program areas rather than managerial challenges such as resource constraints that are part of the challenge of every manager.

Step Eight: Working Environment and Conditions

This section provides information on the effect the environmental context and working conditions have on the achievement of end results for the position. It is important in considering the environmental and working conditions to remember that it is assumed that all appropriate measures have been taken to eliminate or minimize undesirable working conditions; what remains is unavoidable, deadlines, media scrutiny, etc.

It is also important to remember to select and describe those elements of the environment or work that, because of the nature of the job, are distinguished by some degree or combination of intensity, frequency and duration, i.e. it is important to note those elements of the environment or the work that are recurring, and/or must be endured over a significant period of time.

The elements of the Working Environment and Conditions section are defined as follows:

- **Pressures** – the degree of exposure to factors inherent in performing the job which increase risk of such things as tension and anxiety. Pressures related to the job can include the requirement to work to strict deadlines that are imposed by legislation or regulations, dealing on a regular basis with confrontational situations, working within competing priorities over which the job holder has little or no control.
- **Sensory Attention** – the level of attention (i.e., seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching) required during the work process. Considered in this element are the number of senses that are engaged during the normal course of the work. Examples include: auditing, inspecting, conducting or attending hearings, reading transcripts of meetings, proofreading, or listening to tapes of hearings.
- **Demands** – the physical effort and/or strain on the standard jobholder in performing the job to the required standard and any unfavourable environmental conditions to which the jobholder is necessarily exposed in order to perform the job to the required standard. Jobs may require levels of physical activity that vary in intensity, duration and frequency, or any combination of these factors, which produce physical stress or fatigue. Considered under this element are situations, such as work schedules or frequent travel, whether on a scheduled or unscheduled basis that cause disruptions in family life.

In the Model Accountability Profile, pressures are seen to stem from the requirement that the position has to make judgments that might be unpopular; sensory attention that requires attention to details and demands made on the job for travel.

Each job has some combination of these elements, the consideration in identifying the ones for the position in question is the effect that they have on achieving the results that are expected of the position.

Step Nine: Core Competencies

This section provides contextual information on behaviours that must be demonstrated in achieving the results for which the position is accountable.

These behaviours are demonstrated in the following core competencies:

- **Conceptual / Innovative Thinking** - the ability to understand a situation or problem by identifying patterns or connections, and addressing key underlying issues. Conceptual thinking includes organizing the parts of an issue or situation in a systematic way that leads to an innovative approach to problem solving. It includes the ability to «think outside the box», to go beyond the conventional, and a willingness to try out different solutions.
- **Leadership** - the ability to perform as a leader of a team or other group, and to mobilize people to work toward a shared purpose in the best interests of the organization. It is

energizing and alerting individuals or groups to the need for specific changes in the way things are done, and involves taking responsibility for championing the change effort through building and maintaining support and commitment. Leadership can be exercised as a recognized expert in a specialized field of knowledge. Leadership can be broadly understood as formal or informal.

- **Flexibility** - the ability to adapt and work effectively within a variety of situations, and with various individuals or groups. Flexibility implies understanding and appreciating different and opposing perspectives on an issue, adapting one's approach as the requirements of a situation change, and changing and incorporating the changes in one's work.
- **Impact and Influence** - the awareness of how organizational issues, policies and decisions impact public interest/concerns, as well as being sensitive to the differing needs/agendas of multiple stakeholders. It is also acting to persuade effectively, convince or influence others in order to have a specific impact or effect.
- **Listening, Understanding and Responding** - acting to understand other people or situations. It involves hearing and understanding not only spoken or written information, but also unspoken or partly expressed thoughts, feelings and concerns of others and responding appropriately and effectively. It measures increasing complexity and depth of understanding of others, and may include cross-cultural sensitivity

Section Three - Review Checks

A checklist of questions that should be covered in the Accountability Profile is provided in Appendix A. The description that has been written should be checked to make sure all the items have been covered.

Another way to check the Accountability Profile is to look for the most common job description errors:

General Mistakes

- The Profile is too long, with too many details on tasks, many of which are irrelevant.
- The Profile does not focus on results, and, therefore, fails to capture the essence of the job.
- There is an incorrect emphasis on minor aspects of the job.
- There are incomplete facts.

Primary Focus Mistakes

- A summary of duties is presented, rather than a statement of the primary purpose of the job.
- There is a lengthy, detailed list of activities taking 5 to 10 lines. The statement should not exceed 3 lines.

Specific Accountabilities Mistakes

- Activities or duties are listed, rather than major end results.
- The relationship between the end result and the «how» is tenuous.
- One Specific Accountability statement covers several end results to the extent that it encompasses as much as 70% of all that is expected of the job.
- The end result or the means are worded too generally to be meaningful.

Reporting Relationships Mistakes

- Organizational relationships (upwards or downwards) are confusing or incomplete.

Dimensions Mistakes

- There is an effort to be too precise. In most cases, approximate figures or data are enough.
- Too many dimensions are given. Three or four are usually enough.
- The dimensions are not related to the actual accountabilities or the nature and scope of the job as it has been described.

Challenges, Issues and Initiatives Mistakes

- There is an emphasis on elements of the position that are common to similar positions in the public service such as the lack of resources.
- Initiatives are of a short term nature or do not indicate the fundamental changes in the way of doing business that are the intended result of the initiative.
- Issues are limited in scope and do not bring out the broader, longer term implications of the issues.

Working Environment and Conditions Mistakes

- Conditions that are described can be mitigated by some intervention or changes in the work environment, such as the office being too hot, too cold, etc.
- The nature of the condition is transitory and does not represent an on-going element of the work.

Core Competencies Mistakes

- The examples provided do not provide a meaningful demonstration of the behaviour in question

Appendix A - Information Gathering Checklist

Major Responsibilities

- What is the overall purpose of the job?
- What are the major responsibilities the job is intended to achieve?
- Which are the most time-consuming?

Program or Legislative Responsibilities

- What is the incumbent's role in administering the legislation or program?
- What is the incumbent's role in formulating or recommending policy?

Authority and Assistance

- What are the most important decisions the incumbent makes?
- About what does the incumbent inform his/her superior before taking action?
- What are the most important recommendations the incumbent makes to his/her superior?
- What other responsibilities does the incumbent have that may not usually be associated with such a position?

Relations with Others

- To whom does the position report?
- What aspects of the environment surrounding the job make it more difficult to accomplish its objectives?
- What subordinates report to the position?
- Who else reports to the position's immediate superior?

Hardest Part of the Job

- What are the major headaches?
- What is the greatest challenge?
- What are the most complex problems?
- What initiatives are the incumbent called upon to initiate or participate in?

Statistics on Job Dimensions

- What are the approximate numerical values of the items, which help to explain the overall size of your job?

Working Environment and Conditions

- What element of the job cannot be changed to mitigate the conditions?
- What sensitivities must the incumbent be aware of and incorporate into the work?
- Are the conditions temporary or permanent?

Core Competencies

- What issues does the incumbent have to deal with in an innovative manner?
- What is the incumbent's role in leading the group or supporting the leadership of the organization?
- What are the different kinds of situations which the incumbent is called upon to react to or incorporate in his/her work?
- What non-verbal messages does the incumbent have to respond to in his/her work?

Appendix B - Model Accountability Profile

Job title: Chairperson

Organization: Economic Council of Canada

Location: National Capital Region

Profile date: January 1, 1988

Primary Focus

Ensures the provision of professional advice and recommendations on how Canada can achieve the highest possible levels of employment, efficient production and a high and consistent rate of economic growth from which all Canadians can benefit.

Specific Accountabilities

1. Provides effective leadership to the Council in focusing the research agenda, in managing and conducting research, in scrutinizing and refining findings and in building a consensus across regional, political and economic lines on key issues, in order to develop conclusions and recommendations for policy.
2. Builds and maintains constructive consultative relationships with public and private sector groups and representatives in order to identify emerging economic issues and areas meriting Council study or examination, advances the Council's interests and improves the understanding of its role.
3. Ensures that the Council's annual reviews of medium- and long-term economic prospects address issues important to the growth and strengthening of the Canadian economy, are timely and are of appropriate scope, quality and completeness.
4. Ensures that the conclusions and recommendations of the Council on economic problems and issues are effectively communicated to the Minister, to the Cabinet and to Parliament, as appropriate.
5. Represents the Council in various public forums (e.g. press conferences) in the interest of furthering public understanding of, and support for, the Council's role.
6. Assures the adequacy and continuity of the managerial and professional functioning of the Council by effective management of available resources and by anticipating future requirements.

Reporting Relationships

Reports to: Parliament through Minister of Industry, Science and Technology.

Direct Reports:

- Council Executive Committee
- Council Members
- Deputy Chair, Research Operations
- Corporate Secretary
- Performance and Outlook Group
- Senior Policy Advisor

Dimensions

Full Time Equivalents: 124

Operating Budget: \$10.5 million

GDP: \$551,291 million

Operating Budget (Cdn Gov't): \$125,335 million

Challenges, Issues and Initiatives

The Canadian economy is dynamic, reacting to a multitude of both domestic events and decisions made abroad. The challenge for the position is to provide the intellectual leadership that will enable the Council to select the appropriate indicators, perform the acute analysis and inform the direction of the government in shaping macro economic policy for the country.

Working Environment and Conditions

- Pressures** - This job involves significant pressure with respect to providing analysis and advice to the government that might indicate that it is doing a less than adequate job in developing and strengthening the Canadian economy. As the Council's primary spokesperson, the incumbent must deal with significant pressure with respect to the ability to convince the Council's clients and to withstand public scrutiny of the Council's output. Study findings are often controversial and may be seen as threatening by certain interest groups.
- Sensory Attention** - This job involves a significant degree of sensory attention in approving materials for release to the government and the public. The data and analysis must be flawless, and provide the basis for stimulating and decisive debate on the economic direction of the country.

- iii. **Demands** - This job involves a considerable degree of travel in meeting with different economic sectors and client groups (senior federal and provincial officials, representatives of business, labour, international organizations and other research groups) across the country.

Core Competencies

- i. **Conceptual / Innovative Thinking** - The incumbent must find innovative and factual solutions based on analysis, interpretation and evolution of data and other information provided in order to address real or potential situations requiring action and advice. The incumbent must develop economic models that accurately reflect the current state of the Canadian economy and develop conceptual models that project possible scenarios and impacts of changes in the myriad of variables that make up the Canadian economy.
- ii. **Leadership** - The incumbent must display intellectual and strategic leadership in establishing the direction of macro-economic studies and in focusing the research agenda, in managing and conducting research, in scrutinizing and refining findings and in building a consensus across regional, political and economic interests on key issues in order to develop conclusions and recommendations for economic policy. The incumbent must also display managerial leadership in ensuring that the organization has the professional capacity to carry out sound analyses and studies.
- iii. **Flexibility** - The incumbent faces the challenge of bringing together a number of opposing views, including those of the Council's members, with respect to the viability and health of and prospects for the Canadian economy. The incumbent must demonstrate flexibility in bridging regional differences, differing political perspectives and economic intents among Council members in developing public advice. The skill of the Chair in bringing these views together to develop a consensual Council position is critical to the success of the Council's work.
- iv. **Impact and Influence** - This competency is demonstrated by the strategies that the position must develop and contacts that the position must make to focus the attention of the government, opinion leaders and Canadians on critical issues facing the Canadian economy.
- v. **Listening, Understanding and Responding** - The incumbent must be able to identify both verbal and non-verbal cues provided by Council members during Council deliberations to obtain a true reading of the temper of the Council and be able to navigate, with the aid of these signs, towards positions of the Council that can be agreed to by all parties. The incumbent consults regularly with senior federal and provincial officials, representatives of business, labour, international organizations and other research groups across the country, and must be able to absorb and address the many opposing views presented by these groups in order to ensure that research activities are marked by balance and thoroughness.

Appendix C - Accountability Profile Template

JOB TITLE:

ORGANIZATION:

LOCATION:

PROFILE DATE:

Primary Focus

This is meant to provide a 'big picture' preview of the job by focusing on the general key end results of the job (e.g.: product developed; service provided). It provides a frame-of-reference for the audience' and should answer in broad terms, « why does the job exist » and « what is it meant to accomplish ».

Specific Accountabilities

Within the 'big picture', there are usually a number of 'scenes' that provide a more specific portrayal of the job.

Rather than focus on duties and activities, these too should provide the audience with information regarding key end results.

In breaking the job down into component parts, the focus should be on such areas as, functional accountability (e.g.: in human resources - training and development; in decision making – statutory interpretation and application), or, organization accountability (e.g.: strategy development, process implementation, etc.).

The list of specific « key result areas » is to be listed in descending order of importance.

The number of these key accountabilities should range between six or seven. In any case, they should not exceed ten.

Reporting Relationships

This section is meant to provide the audience with an organization chart-like appreciation for where the job exists and in what context work gets done. An organization chart may replace this section.

Dimensions

In many jobs, quantitative measures or business statistics provide relevant information from which to assess the impact of a job (e.g. revenues, budgets, employees, etc.). This data should be both organization and job-specific and provide the audience with « how big / how small » answers.

Challenges, Issues and Initiatives

This section is designed to provide the opportunity to indicate any high level issues and challenges that the position faces in the achievement of the results that are expected of the position.

This section also provides the opportunity to indicate any specific initiatives that the position is called upon to undertake.

Working Environment and Conditions

This section should provide contextual information based on such indices as: working environment, travel demands, sensory attention, physical effort, and/or mental pressures.

Pressures

This sub-factor involves the degree of exposure to factors inherent in performing the job, which increase risk of such things as tension or anxiety.

It refers to progressive degrees of exposure of varying intensities to factors inherent in the work process, which increase the risk of tension or anxiety. Examples of such factors include: pressures related to the job can include the requirement to work to strict deadlines that are imposed by legislation or regulations, dealing on a regular basis with confrontational situations, working within competing priorities over which the job holder has little or no control.

Sensory Attention

This sub-factor involves the level of sensory attention (i.e., seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching) required during the work process.

It refers to the extent to which concentrated levels of sensory attention are required during the work process that vary in intensity, duration and frequency. Examples include: auditing, inspecting, monitoring video display terminals, proof-reading, or listening to tapes on a Dictaphone.

Demands

This sub-factor involves the physical effort and/or strain on the standard jobholder in performing the job to the required standard and any unfavourable environmental conditions to which the jobholder is necessarily exposed in order to perform the job to the required standard.

Jobs may require levels of physical activity that vary in intensity, duration and frequency, or any combination of these factors, which produce physical stress or fatigue. Considered under this element are situations, such as work schedules or frequent travel, whether on a scheduled or unscheduled basis that cause disruptions in family life.

Core Competencies

This section should provide contextual information based on behaviours that must be demonstrated in achieving the results for which the position is accountable. These behaviours are demonstrated in the following competencies:

- i. **Conceptual / Innovative Thinking** - This competency involves the ability to understand a situation or problem by identifying patterns or connections, and addressing key underlying issues. Conceptual thinking includes organizing the parts of an issue or situation in a systematic way that leads to an innovative approach to problem solving. It includes the ability to « think outside the box », to go beyond the conventional, and a willingness to try out different solutions.
- ii. **Leadership** - This Competency is the ability to perform as a leader of a team or other group, and to mobilize people to work toward a shared purpose in the best interests of the organization. It is energizing and alerting individuals or groups to the need for specific changes in the way things are done, and involves taking responsibility for championing the change effort through building and maintaining support and commitment. Leadership can be exercised as a recognized expert in a specialized field of knowledge. Leadership can be broadly understood as formal or informal.
- iii. **Flexibility** - This Competency involves the ability to adapt and work effectively within a variety of situations, and with various individuals or groups. Flexibility implies understanding and appreciating different and opposing perspectives on an issue, adapting one's approach as the requirements of a situation change, and changing and incorporating the changes in one's work.
- iv. **Impact and Influence** - This Competency involves the awareness of how organizational issues, policies and decisions impact public interest/concerns, as well as being sensitive to the differing needs/agendas of multiple stakeholders. It is also acting to persuade effectively, convince or influence others in order to have a specific impact or effect.
- v. **Listening, Understanding and Responding** - This Competency involves acting to understand other people or situations. It involves accurately hearing and understanding not only spoken or written information, but also unspoken or partly expressed thoughts, feelings, and concerns of others and responding appropriately and effectively. It

measures increasing complexity and depth of understanding of others, and may include cross-cultural sensitivity.