## Workplace Skills

## National Occupation Classification

## Job Descriptions: An Employers' Handlbook

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How to write them - How to use them
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# JOB DESCRIPTIONS: AN EMPLOYERS' HANDBOOK 

How to write them - How to use them

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## INTRODUCTION

Written specifically for smaller organizations, this Handbook provides information on one of the key aspects of human resources management: job descriptions.

This Handbook will explain how:

- To write job descriptions adapted to your business needs;
- The National Occupational Classification (NOC) can help you in writing them; and
- To use the job descriptions for multiple HR-related tasks.


## About the National Occupational Classification (NOC)

This Handbook is based on using the NOC as the basis for developing job descriptions. Originally created to provide labour market analysts with a common understanding of different jobs found in Canada's world of work, the NOC is used daily by professionals, including career and employment counsellors and human resources specialists. Based on the analysis of the actual work performed by Canadians and using words commonly found in Canada's job market, the NOC, as you will see, is a key tool in helping develop job descriptions adapted to your business needs.

## CREATING JOB DESCRIPTIONS THAT FIT YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS

In general, a job description includes the title, a description of the tasks performed, and information on working conditions. It can also include any other attributes that the employer requires for that position such as: education, knowledge, skills and personality suitability.

Developing and keeping job descriptions up-to-date can benefit your organization by:

- providing a basis to evaluate employee performance;
- identifying skill gaps, thereby increasing the effectiveness of training;
- helping to ensure an effective and "thought-through" hiring process; and
- assisting in comparing the duties for positions to better establish relative pay rates.


## How the National Occupational Classification (NOC) can help with creating job descriptions

The job descriptions found in the NOC (www.hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca/noc) cover all occupations found in the Canadian labour market and are based on research and interviews with workers, employers and field specialists. An example is shown in Figure A (on page 6). Annex 1 also provides you with information on how to use the NOC search engine available over the Internet.

When creating job descriptions for your organization feel free:

- To adapt the information found in the NOC using your own words to describe the work performed by employees;
- To combine information from different NOC descriptions to better identify the job performed by your employees, especially if positions in your company have tasks that span more than one occupation.

To clearly define the work performed by employees, job descriptions can also identify specific working conditions that are not listed in the NOC. Examples include:

- health or safety hazards (e.g. working with dangerous material);
- shift work or long hours (e.g. overtime);
- working in unusual conditions (e.g. underground, isolated locations);
- physical requirements (e.g. lifting, standing for long periods of time);
- location (e.g. downtown or outside the city); and
- frequent traveling.

In Annex 2, you will find a sample template for a job description (i.e. Template 2.1). We encourage you to use it and, if need be, to modify it to meet your specific business needs. Remember: job descriptions can be as flexible as you want them to be.

With your detailed job descriptions in hand, you can, as we will see in the next chapter, create additional tools to more efficiently manage your human resources.

## Here is what an actual NOC job description looks like.

## Figure A

## NOC profile for Secretaries

## 1241 Secretaries (Except Legal and Medical)

Secretaries perform a variety of administrative duties in support of managerial and professional employers. They are employed throughout the private and public sectors.

## Example Titles

executive secretary (except Legal and Medical)
private secretary
secretary (except Legal and Medical)
technical secretary
>> View all titles

## Main duties

Secretaries perform some or all of the following duties:

- Prepare, key in, edit and proofread correspondence, invoices, presentations, brochures, publications, reports and related material from shorthand, machine dictation and handwritten copy using computers
- Open and distribute incoming regular and electronic mail and other material and co-ordinate the flow of information internally and with other departments and organizations
- Schedule and confirm appointments and meetings of employer
- Order office supplies and maintain inventory
- Answer telephone and electronic enquiries and relay telephone calls and messages
- Set up and maintain manual and computerized information filing systems
- Determine and establish office procedures
- Greet visitors, ascertain nature of business and direct visitors to employer or appropriate person
- Record and prepare minutes of meetings
- Arrange travel schedules and make reservations
- May compile data, statistics and other information and may conduct research
- May organize conferences
- May supervise and train other staff in procedures and in use of current software.


## Employment requirements

- Completion of secondary school is usually required.
- Completion of a one- or two-year college or other program for secretaries or
Previous clerical experience is required.


## Classified elsewhere

- Court Recorders and Medical Transcriptionists (1244)
- Executive Assistants (1222)
- Legal Secretaries (1242)
- Medical Secretaries (1243)
- Office managers (in $\underline{1221}$ Administrative Officers)

Figure B shows an example of a typical job description for a secretary who also works as an administrative assistant. Italicized information comes from the NOC descriptions, while the non-italicized information was added to provide readers with an example of a more practical job description for the position of Secretary.

## Figure B

## Work Description for Secretary

Date: February 3rd, 2006

## Main functions:

Working at the corporate office, the Secretary supports the work of the owner and assists, when schedule and workload permit, the Director of Production.

## Reports to:

Owner

## Duties:

The Secretary performs the following duties:

- Answer telephone and electronic enquiries and relay telephone calls and messages
- Greet visitors, ascertain nature of business and direct visitors to employer or appropriate person
- Schedule and confirm appointments and meetings of employer
- Open and distribute incoming regular and electronic mail and other material and co-ordinate the flow of information internally and with other departments and organizations
- Open and administer regular and electronic mail for the owner and follow-up, when required, to ensure proper action is taken on all incoming mail
- Prepare, key in, edit and proofread correspondence, invoices, presentations, brochures, publications, reports and related material from shorthand, machine dictation and handwritten copy using computers
- Determine and establish office procedures
- Order office supplies and maintain inventory
- Arrange travel schedules and make reservations
- Perform any other duties related to the position of secretary, as directed by the owner and CEO and, when schedule and workload permit, the Director of Production


## Working conditions:

- Workweeks are 5 days, Monday to Friday, 8 hours per day, starting at 8:30 am in the morning
- The Secretary is entitled to one hour of paid time for lunch
- The Secretary is frequently exposed to noise and a regular flow of people around the office
- The Secretary is frequently assigned to changing priorities
- The Secretary may be required to work overtime, with paid compensation


## Employment Requirements:

- Completion of secondary school is usually required.
- Completion of a one- or two-year college or other program for secretaries
- Five years of experience
- Proficient spoken and written English
- Punctual, meticulous and reliable
- Courteous manners with the public


## USING THE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Building from Chapter 1, Creating Job Descriptions, this chapter will explain how you can use the job descriptions as a tool to:
A. Evaluate employee performance;
B. Identify your employees' training needs;
C. Hire employees; and
D. Help establish pay rates between two or more positions by comparing factors such as responsibilities, workloads and the relative value to the organization

We have included in Annex 2 a number of sample templates to use as a guide to help you integrate some of these HR management activities in your organization.

## A. Using job descriptions to evaluate employee performance

Creating detailed job descriptions can help in clearly communicating the work objectives you want your employees to achieve. By evaluating your employees, you can also more easily:

- identify key performers for promotion or those ready for a new challenge within the company;
- provide supportive documentation to acknowledge employee contributions or areas for improvement;
- evaluate employee progress after training, and identify any remaining gaps; and
- create a stronger bond between the organization and the employees, especially if employees are invited to take part in setting their expected level of performance and in rating the quality of their work.

Listed below is an example of steps to follow to illustrate how you can use your job descriptions to evaluate your employees.

Step 1. From the job description, list the duties you want to evaluate;
Step 2. Describe the level of performance that is expected in ways that can be measured (quality or quantity of work performed) for each of the duties;

Step 3. Make the timing of evaluation clear: annual, monthly or other;

Step 4. Provide concrete feedback to your employees. A simple rating scale such as "did not meet objectives", "met objectives" and "surpassed objectives" may be used.

Step 5. Suggest specific ways in which the employee could improve. This could include on-the-job training, certification or change of behaviour.

Step 6. If your employees regularly exceed their work objectives, discuss with them other types of work they might be interested in or qualified for to ensure they continue to be motivated and challenged. This can help your company grow and prosper.

Template 2.2 in Annex 2 provides a sample of an evaluation form you can adapt to fit your particular needs.

## B. Using job descriptions to identify your employees' training needs

Many business challenges such as the introduction of new technology, or increased business competition, can be more easily met when employees are well prepared and trained to have the required skills.

With detailed job descriptions, you can compare the actual tasks of employees to what needs to be done within the organization. This helps you easily identify critical areas that need to be addressed, ensuring you have a global view of your organization's strengths and weaknesses and, at the same time, a detailed view of each employee's areas of strengths and areas for improvement or change.

Also, training your employees can help create stronger bonds between the organization and employees, helping you retain staff. Other reasons why training your employees may benefit your business in the long run include:

- Technological change: When job requirements change due to the introduction of new technology, comparing the position's current job description to new requirements can help identify skills gaps and identify the learning and training needs of employees, ensuring a smoother transition to the effective use of new technology.
- Succession planning: By using the job descriptions to identify the employment requirements of positions critical to the success of the organization, a manager can more easily identify the skills required by other employees should the vital position become vacant.
- Continuous improvement and innovation: Organizations need to be constantly aware of new developments taking place in their field of business. A company that identifies and supports the skills development of its employees which has been matched against current and anticipated needs, is a company that increases its chances of not falling behind competitors.

The sample template used to evaluate your employees (i.e. Template 2.2) can also be used in helping determine their training needs.

## C. Using job descriptions to hire employees

With the specific information contained in the job description (such as functions and duties, qualifications, education, experience and personality suitability), the recruitment process can be done more easily and more effectively since all the information required for the position to be filled is already available and, most importantly, already "thought-through".

The information found in a job description can help you draft a detailed job posting that can include:

- the title of the job (what you plan to call the position);
- a summary of the job description;
- the employment requirements (e.g. education, training, qualifications and skills) you are looking for the candidate to possess at entry level and, possibly, those that will need to be acquired; and
- the conditions of employment (e.g. full time or part time, shif work, working with hazardous material).

In Annex 2, Template 2.3, you will find the different information you can include in a detailed job posting. We have also provided you with an example of what a job ad on jobbank.gc.ca looks like.

## D. Using job descriptions to help establish pay rates between two or more positions by comparing workloads and their value to the organization

Job descriptions can help you establish pay rates between positions that seem to be similar, based on the requirements you select. These requirements can include: duties, experience, specific knowledge, certification, evaluation results or client reviews.

Template 2.4 in Annex 2 is provided as an example to assist you in comparing positions to establish pay rates, inviting you to assign to each duty and role a value according to difficulty, responsibility and the impact of this position on the success of the organization. Again, feel free to adapt it to better fit your precise business needs.

There is no scientific or precise way of deciding exactly what a particular job is worth to a company. Your judgment and what competitors offer for a similar position are key factors to consider when trying to put a dollar value on the work that is taking place in your organization.

## OTHER USEFUL INTERNET SITES¹

The Department of Human Resources and Social Development Canada and Service
Canada have different programs and services in place that can support your business objectives. Visit www.hrsdc.gc.ca and www.servicecanada.gc.ca
The Canada Business Gateway can inform and assist you on a variety of businessrelated topics. Visit www.canadabusiness.gc.ca
Essential Skills profiles can assist you in developing training programs and learning plans adapted to your business. Visit www.hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca/essentialskills
To post your job ads free of charge on the largest Web-based network of job postings available to Canadians, visit www.jobbank.gc.ca
For national, regional and local labour market information, including wage information, visit www.labourmarketinformation.ca

For job prospects and projections, visit www.jobfutures.ca
The Red Seal certification allows qualified tradespersons to practice their trade in any province or territory in Canada where the trade is designated without having to write further examinations. For more information, visit www.red-seal.ca

For more information on how to conduct a complaint-free hiring process, become familiar with the Canadian Human Rights Commission Guide to Screening and Selection in Employment at www.chrc-ccdp.ca/publications/ screening_employment-en.asp

[^0]
## Annexes

## Annex 1 - How to use Canada's National Occupational Classification (NOC) search engine available over the Internet

Available on the NOC Internet site at www.hrsde-rhdcc.gc.ca/noc, the search engine allows you to search any information available in the NOC.

When on the NOC Internet site, click on "Search 2006" on the left side bar.

Then use the keyword search function. By keyword, the two most important search criteria are:

1. by the title of the occupation
2. by the duties of the occupation

## Searching by title

To search by title of the occupation, simply:

- Select both the "Group Title" and "Example Titles" boxes to maximize your results
- Type the title of the occupation in the box
- Click on the "Search" button. Your search results will appear automatically
Depending on the title you have entered, you could be provided with multiple results. For example, if you were looking for the description of a sales representative and typed representative, you will be provided with a number of results from which you can select the one more closely matching your needs.




## Searching by duties

If you do not know the title of an occupation or cannot find an occupation by searching the title, you may want to do a search based on duties. To do so:

- Click both the "Lead Statement" and "Main Duties" boxes
- Type the duty in the box
- Click on the "Search" button. Your search results will appear automatically

If your search does not provide you with an occupation, modify your keyword. For example, you may want to use "database" if you are looking for occupations with duties that include using statistics, or "payments" if you are looking for occupations that handle money.

## Annex 2 - Sample Templates and Tools

## 2.1 - Job Description



### 2.1.1 - Example of a Completed Job Description

|  | Any Name Printing and Distribution |  |
| :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Position Title: Secretary | Date: March 22, 2006 |  |
| Name of Employee: Pat Smith |  |  |

## Main functions:

Working at the corporate office, the Secretary supports the work of the owner and assists, when schedule and workload permit, the Director of Production

Reports to: Owner

## Duties:

- Answers telephone and relays calls and messages
- Greets visitors, enquires the nature of their business and directs them to appropriate person
- Schedules and confirms appointments and meetings of owner
- Opens and distribute general company mail and other material, and coordinates the flow of information within the company
- Opens and administers regular and electronic mail for the owner and follows-up, when required, to ensure proper action is taken on all incoming mail
- Prepares, edits and proofreads correspondence, invoices and related material
- Determines and establishes office administrative procedures, following approval by the owner
- Co-ordinates and manages office services, such as accommodation, equipment and supplies and general office maintenance
- Arranges travel schedule of owner
- Performs any other duties related to the position of secretary as directed by the owner and, when schedule and workload permit, the Director of Production


## Working conditions:

- Work weeks are 5 days, Monday to Friday, 8 hours per day, starting at 8 h 30 in the morning
- The Secretary is entitled to one hour of paid time for lunch
- The Secretary is frequently exposed to noise and a regular flow of people around the office
- The Secretary is frequently assigned to changing priorities
- The Secretary may be required to work overtime, with paid compensation


## Employment Requirements:

- Completion of a post-secondary program for secretaries / administrative assistant
- Five years of experience as a Secretary / Administrative Assistant
- Proficient spoken and written English
- Punctual, meticulous and reliable
- Courteous manners with the public


## 2.2 - Employee Performance Evaluation Form and Training Plan

| Name of Employee: |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Position Title: |  |  |  |  |
| Evaluation from ___ , 200_ to ___ 200_ |  |  |  |  |
| SECTION 1 - Evaluation |  |  |  |  |
| Work objectives | Expected <br> Standard | Activities required | Evaluation | Areas for Improvement |
| In this section, list the work objectives that are to be evaluated, taken directly from the job description. | List the ways the objectives will be measured. You can include results based on quality, quantity, timeliness, etc. | List the activities that are needed to meet the objectives. This is particularly useful where improvement is required. <br> To help in reaching the work objectives, training and skills updating activities can be added to the activities | Provide concrete feedback. A simple rating scale may be applied: <br> 1. Did not meet the objectives <br> 2. Met the objectives <br> 3. Surpassed the objectives | Suggest ways in which the employee can improve. The information may include formal or on-the-job training, supervision by a colleague, changes in behaviour, etc. |

## SECTION 2 - Discussion with employee and targets for the next evaluation

1. What do you consider to be your most important achievements of the past $\qquad$ ? (insert the timeframe: quarter, year, etc)
2. What elements of your job do you consider the most difficult?
3. What action could be taken to help you with this / these issue(s)? (answer could include training, coaching, modification to work schedule, etc)
4. The objective(s) for the next evaluation period (based on employee's input and needs of the organization) are:

2 The first three columns are completed at the start of the evaluation period. The last two columns are completed at the end of the stated timeframe, along with Section 2.

### 2.2.1 - Example of a Complete Performance Evaluation Form and Training Plan

| Name of Employee: Jane Doe |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Position Title: Secretary / Administrative Assistant |  |  |  |  |
| Evaluation from March, 2005 to March 2006 |  |  |  |  |
| SECTION 1 - Evaluation |  |  |  |  |
| Work objectives | Expected Standard | Activities required | Evaluation | Areas for Improvement |
| 1. Prepares, edits and proofreads invoices | 1. To reduce the amount of financial errors in invoicing by $20 \%$. | 1. A new electronic/ computerized filing system will be created and all invoices will be numbered by activity and initialled by the responsible officer. | 1. Did not meet the objectives | 1. A course (Certification in office management) will be taken with the objective of putting in place an effective and professional filing system for invoicing. |
| 2. Co-ordinates and manages office services such as accommodation, purchasing equipment and supplies. | 2. To reduce the amount of overhead in office supplies, including paper, by $15 \%$. | 2a. New contracts pushing for "just in time delivery" will be negotiated with suppliers. <br> 2b. Officers will provide expected needs for office furniture, on a monthly basis. | 2. Surpassed objectives. The amount of overhead has been reduced by $17 \%$. | 2. Does not apply. |

## SECTION 2 - Discussion with employee and targets for the next evaluation

1. What do you consider to be your most important achievements of the past year?

- To have created an office supplies management system that was well received
- To have reduced the costs of travelling by signing agreements with hotel chains and car rental companies.

2. What elements of your job do you consider the most difficult?

- To have a role in detailing the invoicing.

3. What action could be taken to help you with this / these issue(s)?

- Each officer should be responsible for creating, from a common system, the invoices under his/her responsibility. I should only be responsible for filing the invoices.

4. The objective(s) for the next evaluation are:

- Creation of a new system for classifying and organizing legal and governmental papers (including taxes) in order to assist the accounting firm.
- Creation of a guide on "administration rules and procedures" for employees.
- The first three columns are completed at the start of the evaluation period. The last two columns are completed at the end of the stated timeframe, along with Section 2.
- As a result of the evaluation, training needs have been identified.
- The objectives listed in Section 2 would then be listed in Section 1 of a new evaluation for the next period, i.e. the cycle repeats.


## 2.3 - Job Ad Information

Below is a list of the different information you can include in your job ad. Keep in mind that the more detailed the information is in your ad, the easier it is for prospective employees to determine if the position would fit their qualifications and needs.

1. Job title
2. Conditions of employment (permanent, full time, part time, day, evening, working with hazardous material, etc)
3. Salary / Wage (annual / hourly)
4. Start date
5. Location of employment
6. Education required
7. Experience
8. Languages (spoken, read, written)
9. Work settings (private or public sector, not-for-profit organization)
10. Business equipment to be used (software (e.g. database, accounting, word processing), electronic equipment (e.g. wireless agenda and email device))
11. Special requirements (e.g. for a secretary, how many words per minute)
12. Technical knowledge
13. Areas of specialization within the occupation
14. Any other specific skills
15. Security and safety requirements
16. Transportation
17. Work conditions and physical capabilities
18. Essential Skills (see www.hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills)

## 2.3 - Example of a Job Ad as could be found on jobbank.gc.ca

## Important tips for a safer job search

## Job Advertisement

Advertisement number: 851065
Title: Truck driver (Straight Truck) (NOC: 7411)
Terms of Employment: Permanent, Full Time
Anticipated Start Date: As soon as possible
Location: Nepean, Ontario (2 vacancies)
Skill Requirements:
Education: Not applicable
Credentials (certificates, licenses, memberships, courses etc.): Driver's (Class 3 or D), Air Brake (Z) Endorsement, Forklift Operator Certification
Experience: 0-6 months
Languages: Speak English, Read English, Write English
Type of Trucking and Equipment: Straight truck ( $4600 \mathrm{~kg}+$ or $10,000 \mathrm{lbs}+$ with $3+$ axles)

Specific Skills: Operate and drive straight or articulated trucks to transport goods and materials, loading and unloading of goods

Security and Safety: Driving record check
Work conditions and Physical Capabilities: Physically demanding
Transportation/Travel Information: Valid driver's licence
Other Information: Delivery of building materials. (Roofing) Inventory counting and control. Must have good driving record.

Employer: Any Name Building Materials
How to apply:
By Fax: (613) 555-3222
Business Profile: Retail/Wholesale Building Materials
Advertised until: 2006/12/02
This job advertisement has been provided by an external employer. Service Canada is not responsible for the accuracy, authenticity or reliability of the content.

## 2.4 - Establishing Relative Pay Rates between Two or More Positions by Comparing Workloads and their Value to the Organization

For each duty, requirement and the evaluation, determine a value ranging from 1 to 5 and add the total points given to each of the items you have evaluated.

(1) For each duty, give a 1 to 5 rating based on both the difficulty of the duty and the importance of the duty for the organization.
(2) For each requirement, give a 1 to 5 rating based on the importance of the knowledge/ technical expertise, the management requirements (e.g. participation in management meetings, number of employees to supervize) and the impact of the job on personal life (e.g. frequent overtime, travelling, tight deadlines, certification, etc).

| Position 1 <br> Production and quality control management | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Rating } \\ & \text { (1 to } 5 \text { ) } \end{aligned}$ |
| :---: | :---: |
| Main duties |  |
| - Meets with clients to determine needs and evaluate course of action | 5 |
| - Establishes worksheets according to specifications and create work order | 3 |
| - Operates machinery to create goods | 3 |
| - Randomly tests produced goods to ensure quality | 1 |
| - Responsible for budget management of each project | 4 |
| Total | 16 |
| Job requirements |  |
| - Participates in management board meetings | 4 |
| - Supervises 2 employees | 2 |
| - Frequently works overtime and deals with very tight deadlines | 3 |
| Total | 9 |
| Grand Total | 25 |


| Position 2 <br> Shipping, receiving and warehouse management | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Rating } \\ & \text { (1 to 5) } \end{aligned}$ |
| :---: | :---: |
| Main duties |  |
| - Determines method of shipment and arrange shipping; prepare bills of lading, customs forms, invoices and other shipping documents | 2 |
| - Assembles and unpacks and pack goods, records contents and affix information | 1 |
| - Inspects incoming goods against documents, records shortages and rejects damaged goods | 2 |
| - Oversees loading and unloading and routes incoming goods to appropriate area | 3 |
| - Manages warehouse and ensures cleanliness of area | 2 |
| Total | 10 |
| Job requirements |  |
| - Participates in management board meetings | 4 |
| - Supervises 1 employee | 2 |
| - Forklift certification | 1 |
| Total | 7 |
| Grand Total | 17 |

## Conclusion

Based on the comparison of the main duties and job requirements, the responsibilities of meeting with clients and managing budget are the key factors contributing to the salary difference between the two positions.

## FAQs: Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. I can't find the job title for one of my jobs or The NOC job description that matches the job title I use is not at all what my employee does. What should I do?

The job title you use may be specific to your company, whereas titles in the NOC are more general. Try searching for similar but generic titles. You can also search by "Main duties" by entering key words such as telephone if your employee answers phone calls or customers if your employee is responsible for customer relations. Check the NOC description to determine if it reflects specific work done in your company.

Also, as mentioned in Chapter 1, you may need to combine information from more than one of the official NOC job descriptions to more accurately reflect the unique aspects of your business.
2. The search engine gave me too many results. Do you really expect me to go through all of these different possibilities?

Many occupations are linked, for example, to serving customers. If you searched the NOC database with a keyword such as clients, it is possible you were provided with over 100 results. You may want to refine your search by identifying other duties.
3. Each occupation listed in the NOC has a four digit-code. What does it mean?

The NOC was developed to provide a standardized way of describing and understanding the world of work. The coding is used to classify occupations according to their skill type (nature of work performed) and skill level (education or training). To learn more about the coding and how it is used in other applications, visit the NOC Internet site at www.hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca/noc.

## 4. I can't find an answer to my question. Can you help me?

Send an email to noc-cnp@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca and you will receive a response within five business days. Please mention you are a user of the Handbook to Job Descriptions.
5. Can you help me in using the templates and / or creating HR management tools and procedures?

To ensure you receive the best advice on matters related to human resources management, you may want to contact a HR management professional in your region.


[^0]:    1 This information was accurate at the time of release.

