

A GUIDE TO WRITING JOB DESCRIPTIONS

SENIOR ACCOUNTANT



A standard job posting for a senior accountant will cover the primary responsibilities and the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in the role. A well-written job posting will have a strong focus on ethics, long-term planning, and an emphasis on building a collaborative environment. You should also include values that help identify a candidate who prioritizes building trust with the public.

This position's responsibility is spread into areas beyond a "normal" senior account. Having responsibility for AP and payroll likely distracts from accounting functions (and likewise with the accounting functions impact on AP and Payroll). The accountant will support the accounting manager/controller.

GFOA developed this checklist to guide you through the process of writing a job posting that will highlight the strengths of your community and finance office, and allow you to hire an individual with a long-term vision, excellent leadership skills, and strong ethics. As you write the job description, consider it as an opportunity to promote your community and organization's values. Highlight the opportunity the position presents, and how a senior accountant fits within the overall leadership structure of the organization.



Senior Accountant Description Checklist

Does the description address the organization's mission, vision, values, and goals?

☐ General Overview of the Role

- Description of community, employer, and department
- Emphasis on [leadership](#), [ethics](#), and financial sustainability
- Promote principles described in GFOA's Financial Foundations Framework (FFF)

☐ Your job description should seek candidates who value the following:

- Open communication with staff and the public
- Trust/open communication



Writing Prompt:

In this section, you should take the opportunity to promote the strengths of your community to a wider audience. A qualified candidate will see past the salary and benefits, and focus on the characteristics of the mission of the organization to

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- Collective decision-making
- Public input/engagement
- Financial sustainability
- Transparency
- Equity
- Procedural justice

evaluate if it is a good match with their personal goals.

Questions or comments about this document? Contact us at certification@gfoa.org. Created August 2020.

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Is there importance placed on ethics and leadership in the description?

□ Primary Responsibilities

- Topic Areas to Oversee
 - Approvals – AP/Payroll/Accountant
 - General Ledger – Fund Reconciliation
 - Reporting – General Financial Reporting
 - Journal Entries
 - Track fixed assets
 - Bank reconciliations
 - Manage vendors
 - Process accounts payable
 - 1099 processing
 - Special Projects – AP/Payroll/Accountant
- Supervision of Staff
 - Accountant
 - Accounting Assistants
 - Temporary Accountants

Writing Prompt:

Prioritizing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the narrative is key to identify an individual that will treat all staff and residents with respect. The themes from the Code of Ethics can be used throughout the description.

Are the skills and knowledge required for the position based on current research and practices?

Is the candidate expected to improve their understanding of public finance while in the role?

□ Skills and Knowledge

- Strong knowledge of and the ability to apply generally accepted accounting and auditing principles
- Knowledge of account classification and financial control theory and the ability to apply the principles of materiality
- Able to read and understand technical material, government regulations, legal documents, and/or complex work instructions

Writing Prompt:

A collaborative work environment is a sign of a healthy office culture. Motivated professionals look for employers that embrace communication and are

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- Ability to work effectively under pressure, multi-task, and organize workflow to deliver high-quality products within established deadlines
- Exceptional written and oral communication skills
- Experience with Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems
- Demonstrate skills through certification (CPFO)
- Build Trust and Open Communication
 - Create Open Lines of Communication
- Use Collective Decision Making
 - Engage Key Stakeholders
- Continuing [GFOA Education](#) and Training Principles

□ **Remember to include the basic requirements of the position and application process.**

- Location, salary and benefits, required documents, submission process, and deadline
- Required experience, education, certifications
- Any residency requirement

willing to invest in the continuing education of staff.

Writing Prompt:

The details in this section are unique to your organization and the role.

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Examples of Ethics and Financial Foundations in a Description

Your job description should seek candidates with experience in the following:

Technical Skills

- Developing long-term budgets, long-term revenue and expenditure forecasts
- Balancing long-term and short-term concerns in decision-making
- Leading cross-departmental teams to make organization-wide decisions/recommendations
- Developing citizen surveys, utilizing survey results to inform decision-making
- Identifying/developing data sources (or collecting data) to help inform financial decision-making
- Developing and implementing financial policies
- Developing systems to monitor budget performance and/or other financial activity
- Analyzing cost-effectiveness of programs/initiatives
- Developing and utilizing transparent processes for allocating resources

Soft Skills

- Working with citizens/constituents to get their feedback on resource allocation decisions
- Increasing the public's trust (or stakeholders' trust) in local government
- Communicating technical/financial information in a non-technical manner (or in non-technical language)
- Coordinating diverse stakeholders to establish/develop long-term plans, including financial or strategic plans
- Conflict resolution
- Engaging the public
- Building trust
- Promoting collaboration

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Suggested Interview Questions

- For any of the values: How do you promote [insert value] in your day-to-day work? How does [insert value] inform your decision-making? How do you exhibit [insert value] in your professional life?
- Tell us about a time when you were asked to do something that conflicted with one of your values and how you handled the situation. (Admittedly, this is a tough question!)
- Why do you think public engagement is important for the finance/budget office?
- What are some ways to engage the public that go beyond just holding a public hearing?
- Why do you think some citizens/constituents do not engage with their local government? What are some ways to overcome their reticence?
- Why do think it is important for the public to have trust in their local government?
- What are some ways that the finance/budget office can help increase the public's trust in local government?
- What role can the finance/budget office play in increasing equity in [insert jurisdiction]?
- Why do you think it is important for the budget/finance office to make decisions in a transparent manner? What is transparency important internally and externally?
- Can you tell us about a time when you reviewed/developed/implemented financial policies [or procedures]? Describe the process/approach. What was the outcome?
- What are some ways you have promoted collaboration either/both internally and externally?
- Tell us about a time when you made a mistake and how you handled it. How did you recognize and correct the mistake? What did you learn from the experience?
- Why do you think it is important for an organization to have financial policies in place? What are some benefits of implementing financial policies?
- Why do you think it is important for local governments (or the finance/budget office) to make decisions based on data? What are some barriers to this approach? What are some ways to overcome these barriers?
- Why do you think it is important for local governments to engage in long-term financial or strategic planning?
- What are some ways that local governments can link their financial and strategic plans?