

Chapter 4

HUMAN RESOURCES

Working with Staff

a) JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Your Board decides which tasks staff, volunteers or contractors will perform. Ensure you have clear hiring policies and develop job descriptions for each position, such as an executive director, caretaker, property manager or administrative staff. Job descriptions include:

- Job title.
- Purpose of the position.
- Specific tasks, duties and responsibilities.
- Qualifications, skills and experience needed. This list may include the support and resources available to do the job.

Job descriptions list areas of responsibility for management positions, and define duties and a schedule of tasks for operational positions. For example, an executive director's job description might list supervision of staff and regular reporting to the Board. A caretaker's job description might list window and carpet cleaning and state how frequently these tasks should be completed.

The job description provides a guide for evaluating employee performance.

Review the descriptions regularly. Involve staff in the review because they know what the job entails. Involving staff also encourages collaboration and lessens the sense of being tested for a passing or failing grade during performance reviews.

Some sample job descriptions are included in the appendix, beginning on page 83, to use as a guide in developing your own. You can also go to our website at www.bchousing.org and click on the *Housing Provider* section, which will lead you to the *Resource Directory*. Scroll down to Phase 3 of the checklist, which contains:

- *A Job Description Writing Tool.*
- *Key Considerations for Defining Duties of an Off-Site Manager.*
- *Options for Retaining Caretaker Services.*

You can also contact other organizations for copies of their job descriptions. Call the BC Non-Profit Housing Association at 604-527-8859 or 1-800-494-8859, or the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC at 604-879-5111 or 1-866-879-5111, for referrals.



b) SALARIES AND WAGES

To determine a reasonable salary or wage, find out what other societies, co-ops and rental housing organizations pay for jobs with similar responsibilities, and use these amounts as a compensation guide. You can also give each position a salary range to reflect the level of experience and skill someone brings to the job, and create room for annual increases.

Prorate benefits if you hire part-time staff, or divide wages and benefits equally if people job share at your organization.

The *Employment Standards Act* sets out minimum standards for wages, benefits and working conditions. Also, you are responsible for paying the employer's portion of Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan and Workers' Compensation. For information:

- Visit www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/E/96113_01.htm to see the *Employment Standards Act*, and www.labour.gov.bc.ca/esb/intro.htm for a guide to the Act.
- Visit the website www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/ae-ei/yrs/4.0_e.shtml or call 1-800-206-7218 for information on your responsibilities under the Employment Insurance program.
- Visit www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/isp/common/cpptoc_e.shtml or call 1-800-277-9914 for information on the Canada Pension Plan.
- Call the Workers Compensation Board at 604-244-6181 or 1-888-922-2768, or visit the website www.worksafebc.com.

c) THE HIRING PROCESS

Advertise

When you need to fill a position, advertise the job in the local newspaper, contact your local Canada Employment Centre, and phone or post a notice at other community organizations to let them know you're hiring. In the advertisement, summarize the tasks and responsibilities outlined in the job description, including hours of work and term of the position, and the application process, such as sending a resume and the closing date for applications.

Interview

You can develop an interview panel, usually three people who are familiar with the position and job requirements. The panel would compare applicants' resumes to the advertised requirements, and select interview candidates who meet these requirements. Before the interviews, the panel should prepare a list of questions to assess the applicant's qualifications and suitability for the position, including past experience, how they would handle situations they could encounter on the job, and how they have dealt with challenges in previous positions. This selection process ensures a fair comparison and assessment of each candidate's strengths and weaknesses, and can help determine the most suitable person for the job.



Before offering the position to a candidate, check references to find out how they've handled responsibility in past, what they're like to work with, and whether previous employers would hire them again. Your panel members can develop reference questions that are specific to the position being filled.

Make a Job Offer

Put the job offer in writing, as a contract or letter of agreement which states:

- Starting date.
- Job title, wages or salary, and pay periods.
- Hours of work.
- Period of probation.
- Benefits including holidays, vacation pay, sick and other leaves (maternity, family illness, bereavement, educational).
- Pension contributions.
- Allowances for vehicle use, meals, etc.
- Performance evaluation process.

d) TRAINING

New employees need on the job training and an orientation session to become familiar with their responsibilities and the way the organization does business. The Board can brief a new executive director or manager and be accessible for ongoing consultation. A supervisor or Board member may be assigned to train other employees, depending on the position. If someone is leaving, plan a two-week overlap so the person who's been doing the job can explain the duties to your new employee.

Give new employees materials they can refer to for information such as:

- A list of phone contacts.
- A list of current projects and events.
- Manuals, books, newsletters, brochures and other records on your organization, housing programs and issues, and related services.
- A job description, letter outlining expectations and standards.

Ongoing training for Board members, staff and volunteers helps people develop skills and broaden their knowledge. Periodically, you may want to review the skills you need on the Board and among staff, and use this information to determine your training needs.



Housing Provider Workshops

You can arrange training through the BC Non-Profit Housing Association or Co-operative Housing Federation of BC. The BCNPHA offers a variety of workshops in topics such as property management, Board development, conflict resolution skills, community building, project development and housing programs. Call 604-527-8859 or 1-800-494-8859.

The CHF BC offers education and consultation services for member co-ops and other housing groups. CHF BC consultants provide meeting facilitation, community development, conflict resolution and problem solving services. You can also arrange a workshop at your development in topics such as Board and committee responsibilities, financial management, maintenance and property management, communication skills and member relations. Call 604-879-5111 or 1-866-879-5111.

In addition, the CHF BC offers *Living With Diversity*, a one-day workshop to teach participants how to build cross-cultural sensitivity and anti-racist change within organizations.

Volunteer Housing Boards Skill Development Resource Kit

Mount Allison University in New Brunswick has developed a resource kit for volunteer housing boards, which contains ten self-directed sessions your Board can use to run your own training workshops. The sessions cover strategic planning, Board roles and responsibilities, policies and procedures, financial and maintenance management, volunteer and staff development, resident relations, external relations and evaluation. Each session takes a half hour, and can be added to a Board meeting.

Visit the website of the Rural and Small Town Program at Mount Allison University to order the kit, at www.mta.ca/rstp/order.html.

Other Resources

- Contact the Justice Institute of BC at 604-528-5608 or visit www.jibc.bc.ca for information on conflict resolution materials and courses.
- Visit the Volunteer Vancouver website at www.vancouver.volunteer.ca or phone 604-875-9144. Volunteer Vancouver provides training and consultation services, and has a resource library of information on non-profit and volunteer organizations. The organization also offers leadership workshops for Boards and a Board Resource Kit.
- Enroll people in courses at a local educational or community facility. Contact libraries, School Boards, community colleges, community and volunteer centres for information on the materials and courses they offer.
- Attend the BC Non-Profit Housing Association and Co-operative Housing Federation's conferences.
- Invite government representatives to discuss housing policies, programs and issues.
- Ask specialists to make presentations about related subjects such as safety issues and precautions, peer counselling, childcare and seniors' health care.



- Watch video programs on housing, social and economic issues.
- Subscribe to publications on housing and other topics.

e) PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Generally, employees receive performance reviews before the end of their probation and then once a year. The Board evaluates the executive director's performance. Other staff are reviewed by their supervisor or the executive director. An evaluation:

- Assesses whether an employee has met the responsibilities outlined in the job description.
- Gives an employee the opportunity to review their own work, job description, the working environment and their supervisor.
- Describes strengths and weaknesses.
- Recommends areas for improvement, a plan of action and a schedule for working on these areas.
- Provides a basis for moving someone to the next step of the salary range, if applicable.

Performance evaluations and follow-up should be in writing and kept on file.

You can adapt the sample *Performance Management Plan* on page 90 in the appendix for conducting staff evaluations. In the first section of this form, staff set four to six key performance objectives (KPOs) annually to define how their work will contribute to achieving the organization's overall goals and objectives. KPOs outline an employee's work for the coming year and provide a basis for measuring performance.

In the second section, staff evaluate their achievement of key competencies set by the organization for that job. The supervisor then reviews the self-assessment and meets with the employee to discuss the performance evaluation and any disagreement in assessment level.

In the third section, people can record contributions beyond previously established expectations and objectives.

And in the fourth section, you can describe current job development needs, plans to address these needs, additional training, and other activities that broaden employee experiences. A rating scale is included for measuring the achievement of objectives and expectations.

Schedule performance evaluation meetings well in advance, so everyone plans enough time for the process.



If an employee is not meeting the performance standards for the job, the evaluation process provides an opportunity to clarify expectations, identify problems and develop a written plan for improvement, possibly with additional training. In most instances, this approach will resolve the problem. However, if someone's performance does not improve over time, a decision will have to be made whether to end the employment relationship. If possible, address any problems with an employee's performance prior to the end of the probationary period.

Visit the federal government **website www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca** and click on the Employer section for more information on human resources planning, including hiring, labour law, pay and benefits, layoffs and terminations, training and development, staff relations and planning, occupational health and safety, and links to related sites.

Visit the Society for Human Resource Management (U.S.) website at **www.shrm.org/hrlinks/allLinks.asp** for links to information on human resource management practices, training, publications, flexible work arrangements, health and safety and other related HR sites.

Refer to chapter four of the *Management Performance Guide* for information on best practices in key areas of housing management including human resources.

Choosing a Property Management Company

Contact your Property Portfolio Manager at BC Housing for approval if you want to hire a property management company to run a development.

The process for selecting a property management company is similar to hiring staff. To find a company with the qualifications you're after, identify the tasks you want the company to handle in a job description, and advertise the contract. Let prospective companies know your expectations for:

- Resident involvement.
- Communication with residents.
- Responding to residents' needs.

If you need help identifying contract responsibilities, call the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, your PPM, other societies and co-ops, or your development consultant to find out what the job involves. When you interview applicants, ask them:



- Practical questions about daily operations.
- What decisions they would refer to the Board.
- What decisions they would handle.
- What approach they use to build community.
- What differences they would expect to experience between subsidized housing and market rental housing.

Check references with other organizations that use the company. Visit buildings the company manages to see their condition, and talk to some residents if possible. When you make your decision, select a company that will provide the quality of services you want at the best price. If the company you choose collects rent or housing charges on your behalf, ensure it's licensed under the *Real Estate Act*.

Most property management companies have standard service contracts. Have your lawyer review the contract to ensure it details:

- The company's responsibilities.
- Decisions that require Board approval.
- The standards of service you expect.
- How the contract may be terminated.

Make amendments to the service contract if necessary.

The property management company works for the Board. To ensure the company you hire is doing a good job, schedule monthly management and financial reports at Board meetings. Visit the building to ensure it's well maintained, and ask residents for feedback, because ultimately, the Board is responsible for the way the site is managed.

Working with Contractors

You'll also work with tradespeople such as plumbers and electricians, service contractors who maintain elevators and heating systems, and consultants who handle your accounting or legal services. Set up ongoing contracts so staff can call someone when they need work done. Have three different contractors or companies bid on the work if the contract is worth more than \$5,000, so you can compare prices, products and the quality of service. Decide who will inspect the work to make sure terms of the contract are being met.

For detailed information on setting up contracts, refer to the chapter on purchasing and service contracts in the *Maintenance Guide*.



Working with Volunteers

Society and co-op directors volunteer to take responsibility for the operation of the organization. Some groups also rely on people from the community or other members of the organization to volunteer to help with the daily tasks of running the development.

You can prepare for working with new volunteers by discussing the following questions among directors, existing volunteers and staff, if you have paid staff:

- What tasks will volunteers be responsible for?
- Where do existing volunteers fit into the volunteer program?
- What talents do we need to run the volunteer program?
- How will we recruit people? Who will be recruited? Who will handle recruiting?
- Who will train new volunteers?
- Who will supervise the volunteers' work?
- How will you deal with volunteers who create problems?

Give volunteers the same support staff and Board members receive. For example, your organization needs to:

- Recruit and train volunteers to ensure continuity and familiarize people with your organization's structure, policies, procedure and activities.
- Include clear directions in job descriptions so volunteers understand their responsibilities.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to give feedback.
- Ensure there are open channels of communication so people can participate effectively.
- Give people recognition for the contributions they make.

Try to match people with roles that interest them. For example, volunteers who enjoy working with people may be good at committee work, canvassing or resident and public relations. Volunteers who enjoy the status of being associated with your group may prefer leading meetings or groups, or handling media inquiries. And volunteers who join to achieve worthwhile results for the organization may enjoy program planning, chairing committees, working on a new initiative, or participating on the Board.



Volunteer Recognition

Volunteers want to know their efforts make a difference, so it's important to recognize their work in tangible ways. Thank people on a regular basis, because everyone likes to be acknowledged. End meetings by expressing appreciation for people's contributions. Ask people for advice and guidance so they know you value their input.

Submit a 'volunteer of the month' profile to your community newspaper or run the profile in a newsletter if you have one, and award pins or plaques at an annual lunch or banquet. And since directors are volunteers too, give each other a pat on the back for a job well done.