

COLLECTING JOB INFORMATION

Using a Questionnaire

Collecting job information

After you have chosen and modified your job comparison system, the next step is collecting information about the jobs in your workplace. **This is a key step.** It needs to be well planned and well organized, because the process will involve many people within your organization.

Accurate, complete and up-to-date job information is the foundation for your pay equity plan. Collecting the information must be done in a thorough, consistent and gender neutral way. There are several methods you can use: interviewing employees carefully following a script to collect job information, having employees fill out questionnaires, preparing job statements or combinations of these.

Don't rely on existing job descriptions, which were prepared for other purposes in your workplace. They may be incomplete, they may not have the same level of information about all jobs, and they may not include key aspects of jobs that have been overlooked in the past.

Whatever method you use, the information you collect -- in point form or as a composite of the questionnaire -- should be checked to see that it is complete, up to date and fully captures all aspects of the work done in the job. Consideration must be made for those employees in your workplace who are not English-speaking and/or not literate in English.

Employers can also use this new job information to:

- Communicate between employees and supervisors about job requirements
 - Update information concerning what people are doing in their jobs
 - Determine training requirements
 - Develop specifications for recruiting
 - Redesign jobs to improve productivity
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The job questionnaire

One reliable and consistent way to collect job information is to have employees complete a questionnaire. A more thorough way is to combine the questionnaire with interviews of employees in job classes to be evaluated.

The questionnaire is a series of questions that asks the employee about her or his job. All employees receive the same questionnaire, which should include in it:

- Any objective standards that can be used to describe jobs (such as words-per-minute required or government certification).
- Examples from both women's and men's work and non-sexist language (for example, eliminate references to "he" and "she" when describing jobs).
- Alternative ways to describe reporting structures, to ensure that skills needed for teamwork and co-operation are recognized and valued.
- A question that checks whether any other relevant information not asked about should be considered in evaluation. Provide an extra page for this.

Before you distribute the questionnaire, make sure you communicate to your employees about pay equity, the pay equity process and the purpose of the questionnaire. It must be made clear to employees that they are not being tested or evaluated in any way. They are simply describing the aspects of their job and not their performance. Be sure your employees understand and accurately answer the questions. Other work-related issues may come up in the discussion, but keep the focus on pay equity. Thank them for their participation.

The interview method may also be useful in workplaces where you have employees whose first language is not English, or who have difficulty expressing themselves in writing, or whose literacy level is low. These employees may need extra help in completing a job questionnaire form. Please note: the Pay Equity Commission has a pamphlet on the basics of pay equity which is available in twenty-one languages.

The information you ultimately collect from the questionnaire is what you will use to place the value on job classes.

If you have modified the factors, subfactors and levels in your system, review the questionnaire to make sure it reflects the changes you have made. Keep in mind that the questionnaire must:

- Collect sufficient information
- Collect the right information
- Fully capture previously overlooked and/or undervalued aspects of women's work

Determine who needs to fill it out

If you have a large number of employees in some of the job classes to be evaluated, it is not necessary for every employee in the job class to fill out a separate questionnaire. You can choose to have one questionnaire filled out in a group meeting. Or a few people could fill out a questionnaire, provided that all the other employees in that job class can comment on the completed questionnaire.

However, if the number of employees in each job class is small, and especially if the number of job classes is small, it is probably better to have all employees fill out a questionnaire rather than to create the impression that some people have been left out. Whichever method you use, make sure it is clearly communicated to all employees covered by the pay equity plan.

Pilot test your questionnaire

It is a good idea to test your questionnaire. It will help you to adjust anything about the questionnaire that is not easily understood by your employees and to make sure they can see how their jobs are reflected in each subfactor. Since collecting accurate, thorough job information is vital to pay equity, making sure that your questionnaire can in fact accomplish this makes sense.

To organize the pilot test, ask three or four employees (both women and men) from different types of job classes at different levels of the organization to fill it out. Have them do this in the actual setting that has been designated for the filling out of the questionnaire. Ask these employees to fill out the questionnaire step by step, and find out if they understand the instructions for each section, including the introductory explanation.

Review the questionnaires from the pilot group to determine if they provide the information you need to evaluate the jobs. If there is something missing, or you find it difficult to place a value on the job, review and revise the questionnaire. You may also find that you need to make changes to the factor and subfactor definitions.

After you have tested, reviewed and modified your questionnaire, you are ready to begin distribution to all the employees who will fill it out.

If the questionnaire is substantially changed after the pilot testing, those employees who took part in the testing should fill it out again.

If there are a number of employees who do the same job, it is ideal for them to meet as a group and complete one questionnaire. Where there are differences in opinion as to the requirements of the job, individual employees should make a note of this difference.

After the committee has gathered the information about jobs, the data is reviewed and evaluated. First, thoroughly read the questionnaires without making any judgements or notes so that you have a sense of each job class. Then, make sure the information on each questionnaire is complete. Check for gender bias.

Assign one or two people on the committee to check the following:

- **Legibility** -- if the responses cannot be read, the employee who filled out the questionnaire should be asked to re-write or dictate the answers.
- **Accuracy** -- whether the job has been thoroughly described and contains complete, accurate, up-to-date information.
- **Consistency** -- whether there is a consistent amount of detail included for each job class.
- **Under-describing** -- studies show that women tend to minimize or undervalue their own work. Care must be taken to instruct female employees to include all aspects of

- **Clarity** -- that the information is not too vague. The employee may need some help in providing detail and clarity.

If you are not satisfied with the information, you may want to collect more by meeting with the employees to clarify the information on the questionnaire or by actually visiting the work site to observe the work being done and talking to the employee. Please note: if supervisors review questionnaires, they should comment on a separate page, but not delete any information provided by the employees. After all the information is verified and the questionnaire corrected, have the employees affected review the changes before the final version goes through the evaluation process.

Where can I go for more information or help?

We are here to help. We can answer your questions by e-mail at <mailto:pecinfo.pecinfo@ontario.ca> or by phone at (416) 314-1896, or toll-free at 1-800-387-8813. Publications and seminars are available free of charge. Request these by contacting us at <mailto:pecseminars.pecseminars@ontario.ca> or through our site at www.payequity.gov.on.ca

All communications are confidential.

The Pay Equity Commission

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