**POSITION DESCRIPTION** (Please Read Instructions on the Back)

- **Reason for Submission**: New
- **Service**: Hqtrs
- **Employing Office Location**: TBD
- **Fair Labor Standards Act**: Exempt
- **Position Status**: Supervisory
- **Second Level Review**: Biological Science Laboratory Technician (Microbiology)
- **First Level Review**: Biological Science Laboratory Technician (Microbiology)
- **Recommended by Supervisor or Initiating Office**: Biological Science Laboratory Technician (Microbiology)
- **Organizational Title of Position**: Biological Science Laboratory Technician (Microbiology)
- **Office Title of Position**: GS 0404
- **Pay Plan**: GS 0404
- **Occupational Code**: 07
- **Grade**: TB
- **Initials**: 10/21/2022
- **Subject to IA Action**: Yes
- **Competitive Level Code**: X01
- **Agency Use**: BUS; Eligible

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**
- **Office of Research and Development**
- **VA Medical Center**
- **Research and Development Service**

**Supervisory Certification**: I certify that this is an accurate statement of the major duties and responsibilities of my position. This certification is made with the knowledge that this information is to be used for statutory purposes relating to appointment and payment of public funds, and that false or misleading statements may constitute violations of such statutes or their implementing regulations.

- **Typed Name and Title of Immediate Supervisor**: Wendy Tenhula, PhD
- **Typed Name and Title of Higher-Level Supervisor or Manager (optional)**
- **Signature**: Wendy N Tenhula 109297
- **Date**: 05/27/2022

**Classification/Job Grading Certification**: I certify that this position has been classified/graded as required by Title 5, U.S. Code, in conformance with standards published by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management or, if no published standards apply directly, consistently with the most applicable published standards.

**Typed Name and Title of Official Taking Action**: Tracie L. Bennett

**Human Resources Specialist (Class.) - HRCOE**

**Date**: 10/21/2022

**Position Review**: Initials Initials Date Date

- **Employee (optional)**
- **Supervisor**
- **Classifer**

TERMS OF USE

This position description is intended for use without modification in accordance with Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive 1605.03 para 5c(2). Because of the detailed and complex duties associated and required of this specialized position, any changes to the duty statements, factor level descriptions, or benchmarks may adversely jeopardize the classification determination along with records management program initiatives and mandates. Material changes or modifications are not allowed.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Research Program strives to promote Veteran-centered care to improve patient experience and outcomes across VA healthcare and community settings, and to advance value-driven care by providing Veterans the highest quality care at the lowest financial burden. The position is vital within the Office of Research and Development (ORD) and the facilities where research programs are conducted. Biological laboratory science provides the link between highly innovative projects and the care that Veterans receive. This position will be located in various facility or regional-level offices within the VA.

BACKGROUND

This is a multi-incumbent standardized position description (PD) for the ORD developed by Workforce Management and Consulting for use by facilities with research programs. To use this standardized PD, all associated duties and responsibilities must be performed.

This a standard PD for use within the DVA, VHA, at a VA Medical Center (VAMC), other research facilities within the Research and Development (R&D) Service.
MAJOR DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Prepare, Test, Examine and Analyze Specimens/Data - 50%

Performs test and examination procedures for diagnostic, surveillance, experimental and reference samples that involve delicate and exacting steps using elaborate and complex instrumentation. Organizes and executes protocols. Oversees lower graded technicians in the performance of tests and examinations common to the laboratory and provides guidance to lower graded technicians concerning those instances of discrepant controls to validate or disclaim the results.

Demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of the reaction of biological systems to chemical or other organic interactions. Interprets recorded or collected data that may involve very fine distinctions to identify trends in results. Develops new procedures or makes modifications to existing protocols to improve the experimental process. Accurately assesses the validity of an experimental process, recognizing common environmental or other considerations that could affect the results. Brings instances of discrepancy to the attention of the Principal Investigator (PI) or designated Manager, seeking guidance to validate or disclaim the results.

Performs common laboratory assays including preparation of solutions and calculation of dilutions and concentrations, pH determination, BCA protein determination, gradient and high-speed centrifugation, and microscopy.

Performs advanced laboratory assays, which may include but is not limited to, Western blotting, fluorescent imaging, and immunocytochemistry, tissue and cell culture, ELISA techniques, DNA isolation and purification, preparation and analysis of RNA, Southern blots, kinase, and signal transduction assays, etc.

Data Management - 25%

Maintains complete and accurate records of all procedures followed and all test results using laboratory databases. Develops and maintains detailed records of all experimental or other protocols. Lab Technician is responsible for presenting the data to the supervisor in a logical and systematic fashion.

As such, the Lab Technician is responsible for data analysis including arithmetic calculations, algebra, graphing of data using interactive computer programs and preliminary statistical evaluations. Results are neatly kept and cataloged in appropriate format. Data are often graphed or displayed in tables to highlight results. Records information pertaining to the storage of specimens or reagents and completes appropriate tracking/inventory system information.
Maintains Equipment/Supplies/Facilities - 25%

Maintains the laboratory facilities and equipment and controls supplies. Follows the medical center requirements for laboratory function as well as those of federal, state, and other regulatory oversight agencies. Establishes inventory and equipment maintenance requirements and maintains appropriate inventories and maintenance schedules. Maintains laboratory stock and orders materials, as needed. Maintains laboratory in a clean and safe condition according to agency or accreditation requirements. Calibrates and maintains laboratory instrumentation on timely intervals to minimize breakdown and delay of procedures. Conducts work according to laboratory safety regulations and instructs coworkers and students on safety policies and procedures.

General duties require assessment of readings and measurements taken, tests executed, observations made, work completed, and samples collected.

Performs other related duties as assigned. Because basic science research includes examination of unknown phenomena, a level of flexibility is required, and tasks/duties may be assigned that are outside the scope of those presently listed.

Factor Level Descriptions

Factor 1-5 - Knowledge Required by the Position (750 pts)

The position requires knowledge of laboratory technical methods and procedures to assist the employee in carrying out (alone or as a fully functioning team member) a variety of technical duties common to the specialty area.

The duties require a knowledge of the basic principles of biological science to assess readings and measurements taken, tests executed, observations made, work completed, samples collected, etc., to understand and relate the significance of the results to the higher objectives to which the activity is related, i.e., the Lab Technician must assess the worth of the data by considering its applicability to the higher objective of the research study, by assessing and reporting on the characteristics and quality of the source of the data, or by otherwise creatively interpreting the data produced.

Knowledge to operate complex equipment systems such as those with numerous components or parts which must be calibrated and synchronized to achieve desired results, e.g., autoclaves, centrifuges, pipettes, subzero freezers, fume hoods, work benches, microscopes, power supplies, pH meters, autoclaves, weighing scales, scintillation counters, centrifuges, incubators, and safety cabinets.

Knowledge of biological, chemical, and radiological techniques or assays and related tasks as required by experimental protocols.
Knowledge of experimental instruments and equipment to verify they are working properly and accurately calibrated.

Knowledge of biohazard and radiation safety standards, policies, directives, Material Safety Data Sheets and how they are applied in the laboratory environment.

Knowledge of the rules and regulations that govern medical research within the VA system, including HIPAA, Privacy Act of 1974, Biosafety, chemical safety, general safety, information security, emergency preparedness, and other agency directives, handbooks, etc.

**Factor 2-3 - Supervisory Controls (275 pts)**

The PI assigns specific projects, provides objectives, and sets deadlines for completing work. The PI provides direction/guidance on novel issues where no precedence currently exists.

The Lab Technician is responsible for planning and carrying out assignments, resolving errors or equipment failures as they arise, coordinating the work with others as necessary, and interpreting results on own initiative in terms of established objectives. The Lab Technician keeps the supervisor informed of progress, controversial matters that were experienced and dealt with and/or far-reaching implications that may require further review. The supervisor assures that the completed work is timely, accurate and adhered to the established procedures and guidelines lines.

**Factor 3-2 – Guidelines (125 pts)**

Procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are applicable. These guides may range from complex, standardized, codified regulations, (such as Federal or facility manuals with VHA, VISN, VACO, ORD, and/or other supplements) standard operating procedures, oral instructions, equipment, or instrument manuals, or standard scientific or technical texts.

The Lab Technician must use judgment in selecting the appropriate guideline because of the number, similarity, linkage, and overlapping nature of the guides, e.g., when State law, Federal law, and agency regulations address the same issue. Most important, however, is that the guidelines contain criteria to solve the core question or problem contained in the assignments, though the applicability may not be readily apparent, i.e., the guides often require careful study and cross referencing. The Lab Technician must be resourceful in researching assigned guides, locating the controlling criteria, and applying it as specified, though the process of locating and selecting the applicable rule may be time consuming.
Factor 4-3 Complexity (150 pts)

Assignments consist of performing a variety of technical duties which may differ in procedures and are unrelated. Shifting from one task to others will occur frequently and unexpectedly. The work which is substantially different will require a wide range of equipment, techniques, and methods used, specific data produced, and uses to which the data will be put; (2) has ongoing or long-term responsibility for limited technical and administrative concerns in a small research laboratory or a limited program or operating function; and/or complex experiments which extend over several weeks.

Performance of the assignments requires making choices when, for example, executing a number of types of sequential, related steps or assembling several pieces of equipment. In addition, duties assigned often have steps or processes that vary, depending on factors such as the type of (3) independently executes defined portions of more comprehensive long-range projects or assists with several experiments being conducted. The Lab Technician is expected to exercise independence in recognizing such differences, choosing the right course of action, and then selecting and executing the proper task sequences for completing the work.

Factor 5-3 - Scope and Effect (150 pts)

The work involves executing experiments and projects that are directly related to the investigators field of research. The incumbent will be involved in all phases of laboratory experiments from design to executing experiments based on specific techniques found in laboratory handbooks and notebooks. Typically, completed assignments constitute a portion of a larger segment of tasks with broader scope, e.g., on a day-to-day basis collects data for use by others involved in research. Work products affect the accuracy, reliability, or acceptability of further experiments such as replicating experiments.

Factors 6 & 7 (2, B) - Personal Contacts & Purpose of Contacts

Personal contacts are with employees in R&D Service as well as employees within the medical center, inside and outside of the specific research program section (BLR&D), R&D Service, e.g., personnel from different echelons of R&D Service and local medical center/facility, or, occasionally, resource persons from State, local or other Federal government agencies.

In other work situations personal contacts may be with the general public, contractors, vendors, or special users, oversight agencies, auditors, e.g., special interest groups, collaborators, or businesspersons. The contacts are usually established on a routine basis, though the employee's authority may not be initially clear to the person contacted, e.g., the identity, role, and authority of the parties may have to be outlined before conducting business.
The purpose of the personal contacts is to plan and coordinate work efforts locally and nationally, interpret data obtained, and explain its purpose and significance. The persons contacted are usually working toward a common goal and are generally cooperative. At this level, some technicians may be required to deliver information, such as how data were obtained and their opinion as to its accuracy.

**Factor 8-2 - Physical Demands (20 pts)**

The work requires regular and recurring physical exertion such as standing for long periods of time, bending over microscopes, manipulating small parts, and lifting moderate to heavy weights. The work also requires fine motor skills and coordination (hand/eye coordination) in the use of laboratory equipment. Some of the work may need to be performed under hoods. Tasks may involve repetitive motion.

**Factor 9-2 - Work Environment (20 pts)**

The work involves regular and recurring moderate risks and discomforts associated with working in a research laboratory (i.e., working with irritants, toxic, caustic, or potentially carcinogenic chemicals). The Lab Technician wears protective clothing including laboratory coats, goggles/safety glasses, and gloves as required by the particular procedure. The work area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated.

**Other Significant Facts**

**Customer Service**

Meets the needs of internal and external customers while supporting VA missions. Consistently communicates and treats customers (veterans, their representatives, visitors, and all VA staff) in a courteous, tactful, and respectful manner. Provides the customer with consistent information according to established policies and procedures. Handles conflict and problems in dealing with the customer constructively and appropriately.

**Automated Data Processing Security**

Protects printed and electronic files containing sensitive data in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 and other applicable laws, federal regulations, VA statutes and policy, and VHA policy. Protects the data from unauthorized release or from loss, alteration, or unauthorized deletion. Follows applicable regulations and instructions regarding access to computerized files, release of access codes, etc., as set out in the computer access agreement that the employee signs.

**Information Security and Confidentiality**

Manages information security within areas of responsibility to assure that computer system security and confidentiality of sensitive information is maintained, and that
employee access to sensitive information is limited only to that which the employee requires to perform their duties. Takes action as necessary to report and address violations of information security.

GEMS

Familiarizes self with how activities impact VA’s goal to implement sound stewardship practices that are protective of air, water, land, and other natural and cultural resources. In accordance with the goals of the VA GEMS program, seeks to cost-effectively meet or exceed compliance with applicable.

Total Points: 1565
GS-7 Point Range: 1355-1600
Employee Name: ____________________________

Position Title/Pay Plan/Series/Grade: Biological Science Laboratory Technician (Microbiology), GS-0404-07
Position Number/Agency/Unit: 99488-S

SPECIAL SITUATIONS (Entire groups of employees/positions considered nonexempt)

☐ Annual rates of basic pay less than $23600
☐ Equipment operating or protective occupations
☐ Clerical occupations
☐ Technician work below GS-9
☐ Technician at GS-9 or above, where purpose of job is to support, not create
☐ Federal Wage System (or comparable systems), non-supervisory
☐ Position requires lengthy technical training, specialized skills, e.g., Air Traffic Control, Aircraft Operation

*If any of above boxes are checked, position is nonexempt and Specific Exemption criteria need not be considered.*

Notes: ____________________________________

SPECIFIC EXEMPTIONS (If employees/positions meet the criteria below they are FLSA exempt)

Review criteria for each of three categories below—Executive, Administrative, Professional—to determine if employee/position should be considered exempt from the FLSA. Failure to meet the criteria for what could be considered the most appropriate category does not preclude exemption under another category.

**Executive Exemption (5 CFR 551.205)**

☐ Primary duty is to manage a federal agency or any subdivision thereof.
☐ Employee customarily and regularly directs the work of two or more other employees. Does not include those who merely assist the manager or supervise in the manager’s absence.
☐ Employee has authority to hire or fire other employees
  OR
  Particular weight is given to employee’s suggestions/recommendations on hiring, firing, advancement, promotion or other changes in employee status. Consider:
  • Whether it is part of the employee’s job duties to make suggestions/recommendations
  • Whether suggestions/recommendations are made and listened to on a regular, recurring basis

*If all of above boxes are checked, position is exempt (not covered) under the Executive Exemption.*

Notes: ____________________________________
Administrative Exemption (5 CFR 551.206)

☐ Primary duty is the performance of office or non-manual work directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer/employer’s customers

☐ Primary duty requires the exercise of discretion and independent judgment on matters of significance. Must be more than skill in applying well-established techniques, procedures, or standards. Consider intent for the position with regard to whether the employee:
  • Has authority to make independent choices free from immediate direction or supervision in:
    o Formulating, affecting, interpreting, or implementing management policies, operating practices
    o Committing the employer in matters with significant impact
    o Waiving or deviating from established policies/procedures without prior approval
    o Negotiating/binding the organization on significant matters
  • Carries out major assignments in conducting organizational operations
  • Performs work that affects operations to a substantial degree
  • Provides consultation or expert advice to management
  • Is involved in planning long- or short-term organization objectives
  • Investigates and resolves significant matters on behalf of management
  • Represents the organization in handling complaints, arbitrating disputes, or resolving grievances

*If all of the above boxes under Administrative Exemption are checked, position is exempt (not covered) by the FLSA.*

Notes:

Professional Exemptions (5 CFR 551.276)

Primary duty must be the performance of work requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction or requiring invention, imagination, originality, or talent in a recognized field of artistic or creative endeavor.

Learned Professionals (5 CFR 551.208)

Primary duty must be the performance of work requiring:

☐ Advanced knowledge (cannot be attained at the high school level). Work:
  • Is predominately intellectual in character
  • Requires consistent exercise of discretion and judgment
  • Uses advanced knowledge to analyze, interpret, or make deductions from varying facts/circumstances

☐ Field of science or learning includes:
  • Traditional professions of law, medicine and pharmacy, theology, accounting, engineering and architecture, teaching, various types of physical, chemical, and biological sciences
  • Similar occupations with a recognized professional status (distinguished from mechanical arts or skilled trades)
Prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction, where specialized academic training is a standard prerequisite for entrance into the profession

- Possession of appropriate academic degree
- Appropriate for employees who have same knowledge level and perform substantially same work but who attain advanced knowledge through combination of work experience and academic instruction

*If all of the above boxes under Learned Professionals are checked, position is exempt (not covered) by the FLSA.*

**Notes:**

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**Creative Professionals (5 CFR 551.209)**

- Primary duties must be work performance requiring invention, imagination, originality, or talent in a recognized field of artistic or creative endeavor
- For media work, must involve more than collection, organization, and recording of information that is routine or already public or if they do not contribute a unique interpretation or analysis to a news product

*If all of the above boxes under Creative Professionals are checked, position is exempt (not covered) by the FLSA.*

**Notes:**

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**Computer Employees (5 CFR 551.210)**

- Computer systems analysts, computer programmers, software engineers, or other similarly skilled workers in the computer field. Does not include employees:
  - Engaged in the manufacture or repair of computer hardware and related equipment
  - Whose work is highly dependent on or facilitated by computers and/or computer software but not primarily engaged in systems analysis and programming or other similarly skilled computer-related occupations.

*If all of the above boxes under Computer Employees are checked, position is exempt (not covered) by the FLSA.*

**Notes:**

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Final Determination of FLSA-Exemption Status:  
- [ ] Exempt  
- [x] Nonexempt

**If exempt determination made, which criteria used?**

**Name/Title of Decisionmaker:**  
- Brian Penz  
- Brian Penz

**Date of Determination:** 09/28/2022

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