

## What You Need to Know About Biographical Sketches and Position Descriptions

By [Trudy Keefer](#), Senior Quality Analyst and [Brian Johnson](#), AASHTO Accreditation Program Manager

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The AASHTO Accreditation Program ([AAP](#)) and the Laboratory Assessment Program ([LAP](#)) both review biographical sketches and position descriptions according to AASHTO R 18 during a review of the laboratory's quality system or during a laboratory's annual review. Understanding the requirements of biographical sketches and position descriptions will help your laboratory meet AASHTO R 18 requirements, which will save time during the quality system review and annual review processes. Knowing these requirements will also help your organization increase its effectiveness.



Biographical  
Sketches  
&  
Position  
Descriptions

### **Biographical Sketches**

A biographical sketch is a brief overview of a person's professional career and major accomplishments. A "light sketch" of a person's career. In accordance to AASHTO R 18, a brief biographical sketch is required for all supervisory staff and must include the following:

- education,
- experience,
- licensure,
- certifications,
- and current position.

Many times, the AASHTO Accreditation Program has laboratories mistakenly submit a resume in place of a biographical sketch. At first glance, a resume may seem to fit the requirements of a biographical sketch. However, a resume is a document used to secure a job interview and doesn't include the employee's current position within the company they are employed. The current position on the biographical sketch should also match the same title as listed on the laboratory's organizational chart.

If a laboratory is pursuing AASHTO Accreditation for Quality Management System standard ASTM D3666, a biographical sketch is required for all technical staff that are trained and qualified to perform tests covered by the scope. ASTM C1077 and E329 also require similar documentation for technical personnel, but do not require a "biographical sketch."

## Position Descriptions

A position description is a general overview of a position's duties and responsibilities. According to AASHTO R 18, a position description is required for each technical operational position shown on the laboratory's organizational chart. A position description is not specific to a person. Its specific to a job duty and must identify the following:

- position title,
- description of job duties,
- required skills,
- education,
- and experience needed for the position.

## Quick Reference Chart

	Biographical Sketch	Position Description
<b>Definition</b>	a brief overview of a specific person's professional career and major accomplishments	a general overview of a position's duties and responsibilities
<b>Must Include</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Licensure</li> <li>• Certifications</li> <li>• Current position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position title</li> <li>• Description of job duties</li> <li>• Required skills</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Experience needed for the position</li> </ul>
<b>When needed</b>	<p><b>AASHTO R 18</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Supervisory Staff</li> </ul> <p><b>ASTM D3666</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All technical staff that are trained and qualified to perform tests covered by the scope</li> </ul> <p><b>ASTM 1077</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Records on testing agency personnel that document work experience, education, on-the-job training, and methods used to ensure continued competence in performing the required test methods</li> </ul> <p><b>ASTM E239</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Records of relevant certification, qualifications, training, skills, and experience of the technical personnel shall be maintained by the agency</li> </ul>	<p><b>AASHTO R 18</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each technical operational position shown on the laboratory's organizational chart</li> </ul>

**NOTE:** When writing or reviewing a position description or biographical sketch, it is important to remember the positions listed in both must match positions listed on your organizational chart.

## **Beyond the Requirements**

Beyond the requirements for AASHTO Accreditation, having detailed position descriptions for technical positions can improve your organization's effectiveness. Detailed position descriptions help ensure critical tasks don't fall through the cracks. In addition, when you define tasks accurately in position descriptions, you can establish goals for the people holding those positions. Task-related goals can help you effectively achieve your company's objectives. They also give you and your team an evaluation tool during performance reviews.

Like everything in your quality management system, position descriptions work best when they grow with your company. Hopefully, your management team regularly reviews your company's objectives. During this process it's good to define and assign any new tasks that will lead you to achieve your objectives. You may need to reassign tasks to help alleviate workload from those who received new critical tasks. These changes in tasks should be reflected in updated position descriptions.

If you realize that you haven't assigned a critical task to anyone, that probably indicates it's not going to get done. If it *is* getting done, despite not being assigned, that's great! Be happy you hired great people, but be aware that you might not get so lucky the next time.

Updated biographical sketches can help you present your best image to potential clients. Your team may have impressive experience, certifications and licensure, but how will project owners know? Your competitors are likely submitting pages of staff credentials and you want to make sure your team stands out. Highlight your team's accomplishments on paper (in a biographical sketch) so when you bid for a project, the project owner will know the quality of your team and select you for the job.

Internally, biographical sketches can help ensure you have the right people doing the right tasks. Use the sketches with position descriptions to match critical tasks and staff experience. This is a chance to use your team's strengths to increase your organization's effectiveness and productivity, don't waste it.