



EMPLOYER GUIDE

National Occupational Standards

Canada

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Canada's Sectoral Initiatives Program.



WMC CFB

Wood Manufacturing Council
Conseil des fabricants de bois

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What are National Occupational Standards (NOS)?

National Occupational Standards (NOS) are industry benchmarks that identify the skills, knowledge, and experience that today's businesses need to succeed in a competitive marketplace.

The NOS are designed to be useful tools that employers, business owners, and HR managers can use to find and develop skilled workers who can help their business thrive. NOS contain valuable information to guide and improve every stage in your human resource strategy, such as identifying the skills for the job, hiring the right employees, supporting employee development, and more.

The NOS were developed nationally with the involvement of occupational and industry experts and successful, progressive employers. The Wood Manufacturing Council and leading wood-manufacturing organizations played a key role in developing NOS that accurately reflect real-world industry requirements.

In this guide, you'll find tips, examples, and best practices for putting NOS to work for your business.

NOS and HR strategy

As a business owner, employer or HR manager, you can use NOS to develop an end-to-end HR strategy or improve your current strategy.

NOS contain vital, industry-validated information about the skills and knowledge that workers need to do the job. You can use them to develop or enhance:

- **Job descriptions.** Use NOS to identify and select the skills and experience that are important for job performance.
- **Performance management plans.** Use NOS to create plans that compare an employee's knowledge and experience against job requirements to identify gaps.
- **Training and development plans.** Use NOS to identify the training and development activities that can help employees reach the required standard.
- **Succession plans.** Use NOS to examine industry trends and identify the knowledge and skills that your business will need in the future.

By relying on NOS to guide the development of your HR strategy, you can ensure that your HR activities are driven by detailed, validated standards that reflect industry best practices.

Enhance the total HR lifecycle

NOS are designed to guide your HR strategy from start to finish, from writing an effective job description to creating a long-term succession plan that protects the future of your business.



Benefits of using NOS

Integrating NOS into your HR practice offers a range of benefits for everyone in your organization and for the wider community that supports your industry.

Employee benefits

NOS can guide employee career development, motivate employees to learn new skills, empower them to reach their full potential, and provide recognition of professional achievements.

Employer/owner benefits

NOS can help employers and owners improve the bottom line by guiding effective HR strategies, ensuring that employees are effectively utilized, and creating a competent, flexible, motivated workforce.

Community benefits

NOS provide nationally recognized, industry-driven performance benchmarks that highlight the levels of skill required and the opportunities available, which helps to promote the industry as a viable career choice.

Trainer/educator benefits

NOS provide the basis for curriculum and training development that aligns with workplace realities and supports areas where additional expertise is required.

Putting NOS to work for you

In this section, you'll learn how NOS can be used in each core HR strategic area, including:

Job design: Develop a detailed, practical job description that accurately identifies the skills and experience required for on-the-job success.

Recruitment and selection: Attract the right candidates, evaluate their ability to perform the job based on validated industry standards, and hire the individual most likely to succeed.

Training and development: Enable employees to achieve performance targets set by NOS and labour market standards through the appropriate learning opportunities.

Performance management: Identify performance objectives, assess employee performance, and support employees to address any shortcomings.

Succession planning: Evaluate the long-term needs of the business and support high-potential employees to develop skills and knowledge required for future jobs.



NOS and job design

Job descriptions are one of the most important HR tools, yet many organizations rely on descriptions that are incomplete, out of date, or incorrect. NOS can help you create effective job descriptions that attract the right candidates by clearly articulating the requirements for success on the job.

NOS outline the knowledge, skills, abilities and other attributes required to do the job. These attributes are captured in detail, along with tasks, sub-tasks, and other variables associated with the job. These elements can be used to develop detailed, accurate job descriptions and recruit the most appropriate individuals for the job.

NOS can help employers to define the full range of activities they expect their workers to carry out, including general skills, such as 'health and safety,' 'working with others,' and more specific technical skills, such as 'planning production,' 'operating equipment,' or 'conducting quality checks.'

EXAMPLE: Using NOS to develop job descriptions

On the next page is an example of how NOS can be used to develop a job description. A large manufacturer is recruiting for a machine operator. While they have an existing job description for this position, they need to find an operator for a newly purchased CNC machine. Using the machine operator job description as a basis, the manufacturer can build a new job description using components of the NOS:

Step 1

- **Look** at the Occupational Background and Working Environment as part of the Situational Analysis section
- Use this information to build the **Job Summary** section of the job description

Step 2

- **Review** the Occupational Analysis section for Machine Operator, with a particular focus on tasks, sub-tasks, knowledge and abilities for CNC Machine Operator
- Use these to form the basis of your **Duties and Responsibilities** section

Step 3

- **Select** the task that is critical to the CNC Machine Operator (job specific)
- Task B1b: Machine Set-up (Computer Numerically Controlled Machine Operator)
- Add this to your **Duties and Responsibilities** section

Step 4

- **Review** other tasks against the existing Machine Operator job description and add any additional requirements
- Add this to your **Duties and Responsibilities** section

Step 5

- **Add** any additional personal qualifications that are necessary for the job, e.g., Personal Attributes, Knowledge of Woodworking Material
- These can support the **Knowledge and Abilities** section of the Job Description

NOS and recruitment/selection



Because NOS describe the behaviours and knowledge required for a particular function, they are an ideal tool to aid the selection process.

NOS can help HR personnel and managers to establish the skill and knowledge requirements individuals will need to meet and determine how these factors can be assessed during the selection process.

EXAMPLE: Using NOS to develop interview questions

NOS are especially valuable when used to design interview questions to assess a job candidate against key knowledge and performance requirements. Here's an example of how an organization can design a question based on NOS:

For a **technical-knowledge interview question**, the organization would start by reviewing the “knowledge of” sections in the NOS and choosing the most important knowledge requirements for the job. Then the organization would develop a question designed to explore those knowledge areas. For example, if a knowledge of wood products and materials is essential, the interview could include this question: “Based on your experience, what steps you would you take in order to plan production for the day?”

For a **general-knowledge interview question**, the organization would review the “environment” section in the NOS and create a series of questions to test the interviewee’s knowledge of a topic such as health and safety: “Could you tell us about a time when you recognized a hazard and took corrective action in response to the hazard? What was the situation? What did you do? What were the outcomes of your actions?”

For a **behavior-based interview question**, the organization would look at specific tasks listed in the NOS and create a question that looks at relevant behaviours. For example, by examining “Task A1: Plan Production,” the organization could develop this series of questions: “Can you describe a situation where you noticed that the work order was inaccurate? What did you do? Who did you discuss the issue with? How did the situation get resolved?”

For each question, the organization would need to determine a range of acceptable answers to the question and develop a rating criteria that allows them to score interviewees’ responses.

NOS and training/development

The NOS, along with the Labour Market Information (LMI) study—are great resources for identifying changes and trends in the industry that need to be reflected in training plans.

The LMI is based on environmental scans that identify industry-wide labour market changes and outline the training and development requirements for organizations operating within that industry. At the occupational level, these labour market changes are reflected in the NOS.



By using NOS and LMI information, organizations can make informed decisions about training and development that will enable them to stay competitive and meet the changing needs of their industry and their marketplace.

EXAMPLE: Using NOS to identify training and development needs

A performance gap can occur because an employee lacks the required skill or knowledge, or because industry practices and requirements have evolved over time. Regardless of the cause, these gaps can be identified and remediated with help from the NOS.

To assess a skills gap, a manager can review the tasks and the sub-tasks outlined in the NOS against the employee's performance to determine whether it is:

- Below expectations (BE)
- Meets expectations (ME), or
- Exceeds expectations (EE)

If a task or sub-task is below expectations, then the manager can identify learning opportunities for that employee, such as:

- Coaching and mentoring
- Job shadowing
- E-learning
- Self-study

NOS can be used to specifically identify whether the training need is skills or knowledge based.

Task B2: Machine the Part		BE	ME	EE	Learning Activity
B2.1	Feed/load wood component onto machine		X		
B2.2	Clamp stock into machine with holding device, as required		X		
B2.3	Machine pieces as per specifications		X		
B2.4	Perform quality inspections, e.g. examine visually, by touch, or using measuring tape, callipers and gauges as per specifications	X			Coaching
B2.5	Identify deficiencies in product or production	X			Coaching
B2.6	Remedy deficiencies, as appropriate	X			Coaching
B2.7	Refer outstanding problems to appropriate individuals	X			Coaching
B2.8	Periodically clean out the machine to keep it clear of debris	X			Coaching
B2.9	Unload and sort machined product	X			Coaching

Using the Essential Skills

The Essential Skills section at the task level and the Essential Skills profile in the appendix can be used to identify foundational skills required to carry out job tasks. Development of these skills can be built into formal workplace training and informal, day-to-day learning opportunities. This leads to improved training and learning outcomes as well as improved job performance.

The following table presents a snapshot of how essential skills can be used to assess an employee's training needs.

Essential Skills used to machine the part	BE	ME	EE	Learning Activity
Document use	X			
Record job order numbers and date completed on job orders		X		
Complete inspection forms to note completed products and to document quality issues		X		
Read and understand graphical displays on computer screens			X	
Oral communication		X		
Discuss issues such as equipment breakdowns with co-workers or supervisor		X		
Speak with helpers to coordinate tasks and provide instruction			X	
Numeracy skills	X			
Take readings to verify machines are operating correctly		X		
Measure and calculate dimensions and design features of products to verify product standards are met	X			

For example, if an employee performs “below expectations” for “**document use**”, he or she can improve performance through training and learning opportunities such as:

- Reviewing samples of completed forms with a manager to become familiar with:
 - The purpose of the form, how it will be used, and by whom.
 - The way forms are grouped into sections, and how each title describes the input information contained or required.
 - Where information is entered, and how the location of surrounding words provides clues.
- Reviewing specific vocabulary, technical terms, and abbreviations.
- Creating word lists or glossaries for reference.
- Practicing entry and retrieval of information for different types of documents, such as inspection reports.
- Supplementing text with images, diagrams, or flowcharts that convey procedures visually.

If an employee performs “below expectations” for “**numeracy skills**”, he or she can improve performance through training and learning opportunities such as:

- Having someone break a task down into steps and explain the operation, formula, and equation required for each step.
- Having someone provide examples (or cheat sheets) of the equations and calculations used for specific tasks, such as:
 - Calculating volumes, dimensions, rates, and percentages
 - Using fractions to calculate dimensions and distances
 - Converting between fractions and decimals
 - Converting between metric and imperial measurements



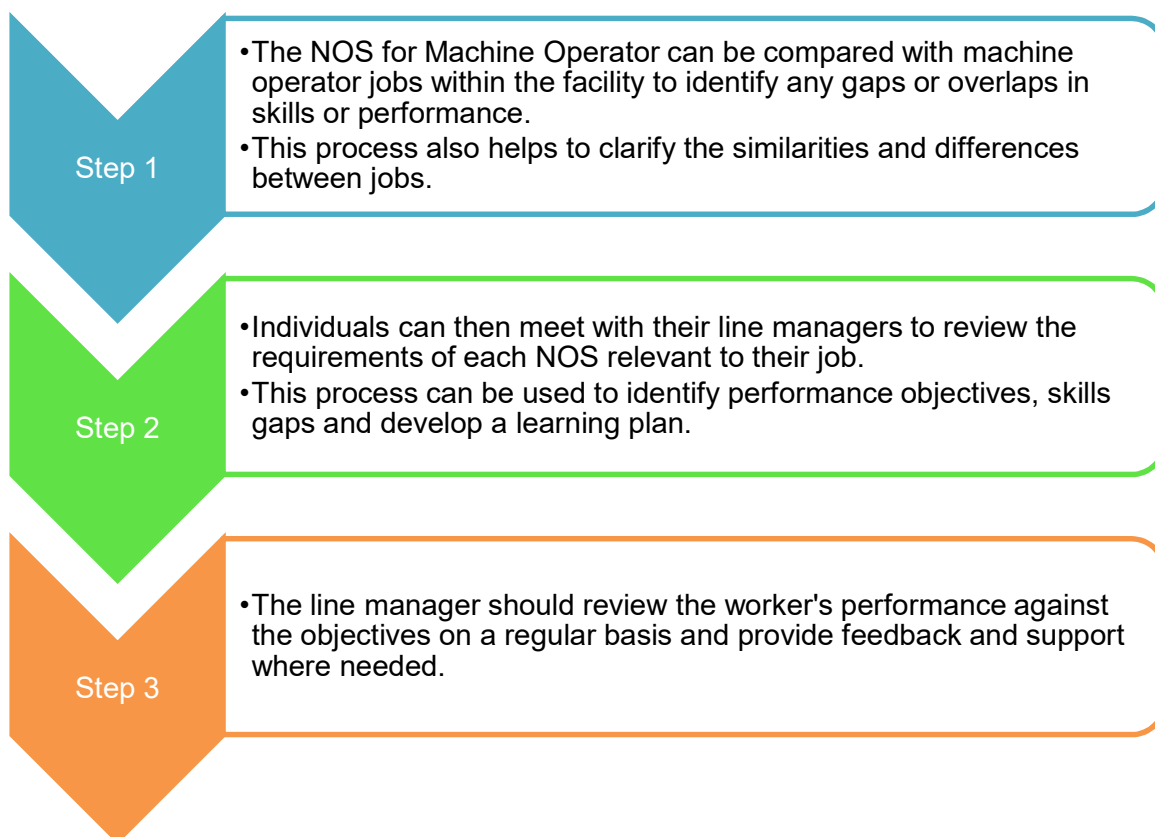
NOS and performance management

NOS can be used to identify performance expectations and assess employee performance against those expectations. NOS can be used in all parts of the performance management process:

- To set SMART (Smart, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) objectives
- To assess an individual's performance
- To identify specific training and development needs
- To form the basis for training and development plans and activities
- To identify performance or behavioral issues

EXAMPLE: Using NOS to manage performance

Using the NOS as the basis for the performance management process can help to ensure consistent and objective assessment. This step-by-step process enables the organization to assess performance fairly, identify skill gaps, and develop a remedial learning plan.



NOS and succession planning

Succession planning is essential in safeguarding the continued, long-term success of the organization.

By identifying the potential of employees within the organization and supporting them to develop the skills and knowledge required for future jobs, employers can help individuals develop rewarding career paths while ensuring continuity for the organization as a whole. By planning in this way, the organization can widen its recruitment pool with skilled internal candidates and ensure that key positions are always filled.

NOS can be used for succession planning by identifying commonalities between the standards for different jobs within the organization. For example, if you wish to groom someone who is currently in the role of a machine operator to become a supervisor, you can examine both NOS to see which skills the individual already has, and which need to be developed before they will qualify for the new job. By looking at the NOS for both positions side by side, you'll see that a supervisor has an additional block dedicated to "personnel management" tasks, so in order to prepare the individual for the role of supervisor, you will need to develop their capacity in this area.



About this guide

This guide was developed for the **Wood Manufacturing Council** by **Human Resource Systems Group (HRSG)**.

The **Wood Manufacturing Council** is a National Sector Council dedicated to addressing the human resource needs of firms involved in the advanced manufacturing of wood products. The mandate of the WMC is to plan, develop and implement human resources strategies that support the long-term growth and competitiveness of Canada's advanced wood products manufacturing industry and meet the developmental needs of its workforce. The Council works to identify and examine the necessary skills and knowledge required to respond to the changing needs of the industry as well as developing an overall strategic plan to address key issues such as the shortage of skilled workers and the need for national standards for worker competencies.

For more information on the WMC, please visit www.wmc-cfb.ca.

HRSG is a world leader in the field of competency-based talent management. Since 1989, HRSG has worked with a range of industries to define talent needs, address skill deficiencies, and improve individual and organizational performance. Clients include global corporations and small or mid-sized organizations operating in sectors such as logistics, finance, accounting, technology, HSE, HR, manufacturing, sales and marketing, and many more.

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