International Reference Field Function Grid (IRFFG)

Q&A

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1. What is a function grid?

A function grid is a table that shows the classification of functions. We evaluate jobs to establish a credible and consistent hierarchy between them and to differentiate internal contributions.

The cornerstone of most HR processes, a function grid is most typically used to define career paths, plan for succession and continuity, design work and organization, support pay structure, and differentiate internal contributions. These are all key elements or essential instruments for optimizing the capacity of our staff, which is strategic to improving the quality of our operations.

2. What differentiates a function grid and a salary grid?

Function and salary grids (or scales) should be disassociated from one another though they are clearly linked, the function scale serving as a basis to determine the salary scale.

To build a salary grid, we can have as many salary levels as we have in the function scale (one salary step per function level, as with national staff salaries) or we can group function levels in one salary level (as has been done for international staff salaries).

Functions should not be moved in the function grid to adjust their salaries! If necessary, salaries can be adjusted beyond the differentiation made in the function grid itself through market adjustments, etc.

3. What is the International Reference Field Function Grid?

The IRFFG is the international reference field function grid for MSF. It is a classification frame of standard job profiles in the field, comprising all field functions (that can be fulfilled by national and/or international staff), from watchman (in level 1) to Head of Mission (level 15). The IRFFG is the cornerstone for integrated HR strategies: compensation, development, recruitment, retention, organizational design etc.

As a result of a professional grading of field functions based on a common set of weighting criteria agreed by all MSF operational sections, functions have been organized in 15 levels, 5 Categories (Basic Skilled, Skilled, Supervisors & Specialists, Activity Managers and Medical Specialists, Coordinators) and 4 Job Families (Medical/Paramedical, Logistics/Supply, Fin/HR, Operations).

		Job Families			
Professional Categories	Level	Medical and Paramedical	Logistics and Supply	HR and Finance	Operations
C: Coordinators	15				
	14				
	13				
	12				
M: Activity Managers & Clinical Medical Specialists	11				
	10				
	9				
S: Supervisors & Specialists	8				
	7				
	6				
T: Skilled Positions	5				
	4				
	3				
B: Basic Skilled Positions	2				
	1				

The MSF **International Reference Field Function Grid** (IRFFG) has not been developed in isolation. It is intended to support the quality of our operations in the field in the mid to long-term by supporting consistency, transparency, fairness and accountability.

4. Why did MSF develop an international field function grid?

In 2010 the operational centres agreed to harmonize the remuneration and benefits package for national staff. At that moment all OC's had their own function grids with remarkable differences between the levels, the classification of jobs within these levels and the weighing criteria when comparing them. In order to build a common salary grid for national staff in a same country mission, as starting point one of the instruments that needed to be harmonized was the function grid. In parallel, the IRP II (the International Remuneration Project for International Staff) also requested a common field function grid.

Early 2011, two IDRH meetings were held in order to discuss the common grounds for building the International Reference Field Function Grid. In those meetings it was agreed that the IRFFG should meet the following conditions:

- Lead to consistent, transparent and coherent classification of jobs amongst different OC's and country-missions
- Be similar to the current instruments in use
- Be easy to use and explain and maintain
- Suitable for classifying jobs in different contexts (different organisational structures and types of missions, country/ mission specific circumstances, etc.)
- Suitable to classify all positions
- Be referenced to the outside world : use an off-the shelf classification system

5. What are the benefits of having the IRFFG?

- A solid base to anchor our HR strategies
- Transparency and Common Language (structure of the grid, job profile)
- Consistency in HR management between sections, missions and populations (NS and IS)
- Reduced workload
- Possibility of adding new functions in the future (intersectionally and per section)
- More clarity, more efficiency , reduced complexity

6. What are the guiding principles of the IRFFG?

- **Progressive alignment:** all MSF field function grids will have to align with the IRFFG

- **Comprehensive:** the IRFFG aims to include ALL field functions without consideration of the employee occupying each position.

- **Based on generic responsibilities:** The IRFFG is based on each Function's responsibilities and the capacities needed for each job position.

- **Coherent: Scored according to same weighting criteria:** All functions are scored according to a set of criteria agreed by all five Operational Sections. This provides equity, coherence and transparency in managing staff.

- **Adaptable:** IRFFG is a tool to enhance the quality of our operations and, as such, needs to be adaptable to meet our needs in the Field. This may require regular review and updating. A maintenance system has been designed to allow this adaptation.

- **Not necessarily directly linked to remuneration:** The IRFFG reflects the relative value of all functions in the field in order to achieve the MSF mission in the most efficient way.

7. How was the IRFFG built?

These are the different steps that were followed:

i. **Inventory:** the 5 OC's Standard Field Function Grids and their corresponding standard job profiles were compiled, compared and analized. As a result, a common catalogue of reference job profiles was produced.
ii. **Editing reference job profiles:** Reference job profiles were drafted on the basis of existing information in the Ocs standard job descriptions.
iii. **Discussion and validation in OCs:** Reference job profiles were reviewed by technical referents in the 5 OCs. Comments from OCs were integrated into final versions that were ultimately validated by the corresponding Directors of Department in each OC.
iv. **Job clasification:** The validated **r**eference job profiles were graded using HAY Group System Job Classification (validated by the IDRH in October 2011). The end result is the IRFFG).
v. **Validation of the IRFFG:** The IRFFG was validated by the IDRH in July 2013.

8. Why did we choose to use the external classification system from Hay?

The HAY system was chosen because it has been tried and tested and, has proven to be consistent and applicable within many different organisations (including some MSF HQs). HAY can be used as a referee in case of disagreement (the expert is independent, objective and has a lot of expertise in classifying jobs in different organisations).

9. Hay classification system: How does it work?

The IRFFG contains standardized jobs. In other words, jobs operating in the same standard conditions - technical, managerial and environmental.

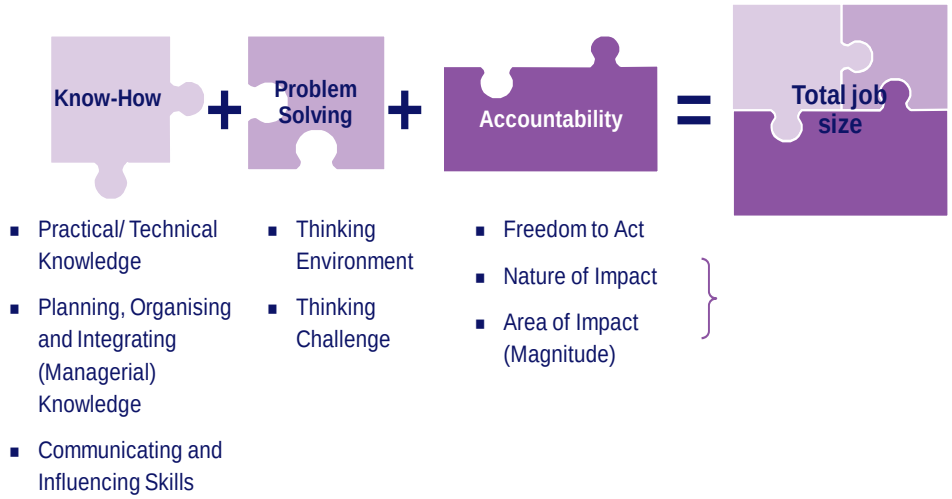
The Hay Group Grading Methodology to determine the size of a job is based on the following three main criteria, which are divided into 8 subfactors:

ACCOUNTABILITY (output) → "A job exists to achieve an end result"

PROBLEM-SOLVING (throughput) → "To achieve this end result, the job must address problems, create, analyze and apply judgement"

KNOW-HOW" (input) → "Therefore, the job requires a level of knowledge and experience commensurate with the scale and complexity of the deliverables"

The 8 subfactors



The outcome of this methodology is a measurement of each job factor and its contribution toward the achievement of organizational goals **in terms of points**. The combined score is used to situate the job in a function grid level, each of which corresponds to a range of points.

10. Why was "complexity" not included in the IRFFG?

It is well understood that missions are not all the same and they face different levels of complexity depending on certain variables. However, the IDRH deliberately decided in January 2012 not to include complexity in the IRFFG (i.e to distinguish HoM A from HoM B for example) because a classification system must respond to the very basic principles of simplicity and clarity. Bearing in mind the International Function Grid had already 150 functions, (now over 270 in 2019), a dual A-B model throughout the whole grid would seriously obstruct the management of the system.

11. Why has the medical family been scored higher than the other families?

Because they have a special and critical impact on the MSF mission of delivering quality health care. When using the HAY scoring system, the highly technical nature of these positions, their critical responsibility on the impact of MSF activities, and also according to the explanations provided in the Job Descriptions, the competency factor is high and the technical know-how becomes particularly relevant.

12. Why are nurses classified in two different levels while doctors are not?

Indeed, nurses are classified in two different levels, while on the contrary doctor profiles are classified in a single level. The rationale behind this, *agreed by the Medical Directors Platform,* is the following:

Both Specialists Doctors and General Practitioners start at a similar level of knowledge and experience. However, whereas the Specialists have the "need" to further deepen their knowledge (studies and/or experience) in a specific medical area to develop their function, the Generalists have a broader scope of responsibility and broader application of their activity. Thus, one consideration "compensates" the other, so to speak.

On the other hand, we understand that specialist nurses (midwifes, OT Nurses, etc.) actually have higher responsibilities than nurses as is reflected in their reference job descriptions.

In short: Specialist doctors with more specialist knowledge and less functional scope, "against" general practitioners with general knowledge, less specialization, but wider scope of responsibility, results in the

same scoring for doctors. In contrast, Specialist Nurses have a higher level of responsibility than a "general" nurse, resulting in a higher scoring for Specialist Nurses.

13. What is the "Common language"?

What makes a job category? What defines a coordinator, a manager or a supervisor in MSF? In order to apply the IRFFG correctly we need to ensure common understanding of the logic behind the IRFFG, specifically regarding the organisation of functions into Professional Categories. In turn, the same definitions and function titles need to be used to create consistency and a common language across MSF.

The Definitions and Common Language Document has been created in English and French to support this effort (download available on irffg.msf.org).

The IRFFG organizes all functions into 5 categories, with 2 of them having a higher risk of being confused - "Activity Managers" vs "Supervisors & Specialists".

14. What are the main differences between Activity Managers and Supervisors in MSF?

Activity Managers	Supervisors and Specialists
Responsible for a whole area/activity of the project within a job family • They are managers of a team, with defined objectives and are accountable for the resources allocated to implement the activity (human, budget, equipment etc.) • These positions require expert knowledge and vast experience in the activity area • They have a high level of autonomy and may be required to represent MSF • Their role is more related to management and normally do not have personal direct involvement in the delivery of the activities • They are expected to provide "strategic input" to the area of responsibility	Responsible for a limited part (component) of an activity • The range of problems dealt with is more limited than activity managers. Problems are solved and solutions found through the interpretation of procedures within clearly established frameworks and guidelines. • Support and technical advice are widely available to these positions • They may be managing a team and supervising their work • Responsible for maintaining work standards within their unit and ensure administrative management of their team • Their work implies a high degree of hands-on activity for which they are responsible. • They are expected to provide "operating/functioning input" to the area of responsibility
They normally report to a Coordinator.	They normally report to an Activity Manager.
Lines that you will normally find in their JP: • Define, coordinate, analyse, propose solutions/alternatives • Accountable for global results • Planning horizon would be quarterly/yearly • Participate in the definition of objectives for the area • Key role in the preparation and revision of Budget and Annual Plan • Provide expertise, support and guidance to the team	Lines that you will normally find in their JP: • Responsible for the day-to-day implementation of specific activities within a closely defined field of action • Implement plans, procedures, guidelines and protocols, and supervise his team to follow the same standards, to ensure quality of x in area of speciality • Planning horizon would be weekly/monthly • Participate in data collection and reporting • Inform supervisor of progress or advises of

Activity Managers	Supervisors and Specialists
• Follow-up and consolidate data from different teams • Report on the activity in monthly sitrep	anomalies • It's likely to have "twin" positions in the project (others doing similar tasks and/or leading similar units, which added together make up the whole activity)
Main competencies: People management, teamwork, strategic vision, results orientation and planning.	Main competencies: Results orientation, teamwork, flexibility.

Another aspect that may help you to distinguish an Activity Manager from a Supervisor is by understanding the difference between an "Activity" and a "Component of activity".

An Activity is:

- a unit with enough size and/or complexity to be considered an entity on its own
- with specific objectives and exclusively allocated resources (human, budget, equipment etc.)
- needing a senior position to lead and be accountable for it (Activity Manager)

The "Activity" is then divided into "Components of Activity", managed by Supervisors/Specialist, whereby all Components added together make up the Activity.

The Status of "Activity" / "Component of Activity":

- Responds to an organisational decision and is not an absolute value (i.e. "Watsan" may be considered "Component" in a project and "Activity" in another one, depending on the size/complexity of the area and the need to properly manage it and).
- Can change over time (i.e. it can happen that a "Component" starts gaining size or importance and, at some point, we decide to separate it from the "Activity" and give it the status of "Activity" on its own to ensure better management).

Refer to the 2017 Definitions and Common Language document on irffg.msf.org for more information.

15. Job Profiles vs Job Descriptions: how are they linked?

Referent job profiles (JPs) have been developed and approved for key functions within MSF. These, with the function grid, are shared through irffg.msf.org. There are currently over 270 referent profiles (up from 150 in 2015) and more profiles will be reviewed by the IRFFG working group and added in the future to meet operational needs.

Individual job descriptions (JDs) should exist for each job in a field mission or project. The job description will (*usually)* form part of the contract with each employee. A JD is intended to outline the **objectives and accountabilities of the position in a specific context**. It sets out what is expected of the job-holder.

The referent JP for the post should be taken as the basis for the JD. The title should, normally, be the title in the IRFFG. You should add the country, adjust the reporting supervisor(s) and, if necessary, any context specific requirements, such as experience in conflict missions, local, specific language or IT requirements etc. If more detailed tasks need to be included these should be included as a short outline of tasks appended to the JD. You should **avoid being too detailed** and precise within a JD.

16. Can new functions be added in the IRFFG?

Of course! The IRFFG is a living tool and is updated on a periodical basis.

There is an IRFFG reference person in each OC, who:

- **Ensures adherence to the international procedure to create a new reference function**
- **Scores new functions created in his/her OC missions** (taking as a reference the previously validated reference functions in the IRFFG and guided by the Hay classification criteria
- Compiles the list of new functions created in his/her OC missions to be presented to the Technical HR Platform and the IRFFG Coordinator for validation.

And, at international level, there is an **IRFFG Coordinator who is responsible for:**

- Maintaining, updating and improving the system (both the Guidelines and the IRFFG), taking into consideration input from the different HR platforms in charge of implementation of IRFFG for international staff and national staff.
- Centralizing information
- Validating the list of new reference functions to be added in the IRFFG and its corresponding grading. If there is no agreement on the scoring between OCs the Coordinator will act as a referee. (Asking HAY is also an option).
- Making changes in the central database and communicating to the relevant stakeholders.
- Sharing and integrating learning from the implementation experiences in the field.
- Sharing the roll out plan to implement IRFFG in the field by each OC.

17. What is the function code in the IRFFG?

Before 2017, each function in IRFFG had a five digit code.

MC001

- **1st digit:** 1 letter for family (category in Homere) e.g. M for Medical, O for Operations, L for Logistics, A for HR-ADMIN-FIN
- **2nd digit:** 1 letter for category (job ranking in Homere) e.g. M for Manager, C for coordination, S for Supervisor, D for Specialist, T for Skilled positions, B for Basic Skilled positions.
- **3rd 4th 5th digits:** numbering of the function in the job family.

Since 2017, functions have seven digit codes.

		Digit 1	Digit 2	Digits 3,4,5	Digits 6,7	Digit 8	
OLD CODE	TITLE	same	same	new numeration	added digits	same	NEW FUNCTION CODE
		Job Family	Job category	number of function in log family	defining generic/ subfunction	A: OCA B: OCB G: OCG O: OCBA P: OCP D: Deviation	
LC001	LOGISTICS COORDINATOR	L	C	0 0 1	0 0	n.a.	LC00100
MD995B	SPECIALIZED MEDICAL DOCTOR	M	D	0 1 5	0 0	n.a.	MD01500
MD021	OBSTETRICIAN GYNEACOLOGIST	M	D	0 1 5	0 1	n.a.	MD01501
MD047	PSYCHIATRIST	M	D	0 1 5	0 2	n.a.	MD01502
LT095B	SAR BOAT DRIVER (GREECE)	L	T	0 6 2	0 0	B	LT06200B

As before, if a Function is specific to one OC it will have an additional letter added to the code: **A** (OCA), **P** (OCP), **G** (OCG), **B** (OCB), **O** (OCBA).

For the missions still using the using the old function codes there is a conversion table available to translate between old and new function codes and titles.

18. What are generic functions and subfunctions?

The introduction of the new function codes has created the possibility to give structure to the IRFFG by grouping specific functions under more generic functions. For example:

Generic Function	Specific Function
LM02500 Technical Activity Manager	LM02501 Electricity Manager
	LM02502 Construction Manager
MD01500 Specialized Medical Doctor	MD01501 Obstetrician Gynaecologist
	MD01502 Psychiatrist
	MD01503 Surgeon

Generic functions and specific functions can both be used for IS and NS field positions.

- If a new position is opened and there is no existing specific profile to match it there are two options.
    - Option 1: Creating a new function and a new function code in the database.
    - Option 2: Matching the position to a generic function without immediately having to create a new specific function/ code for it.
- If a function is expected to be used regularly or by different OCs the first option makes sense.
- In the case of rarely used/ mission specific/ one-off functions the second option can be useful.

The generic functions will help to better manage the growth of the function grid in the future, by not having to create a new function and function code for each slightly different profile in the field. They also provide a generic job profile which will be the basis for the drafting of job profiles for the specific positions. The process of creating a new function in the IRFFG remains the same, getting validation as needed by the technical HR platform, the IRFFG coordinator and the responsible technical departments in the OCs (technical content).

19. IRFFG Tools and Documents available on irffg.msf.org

- Intersectional Function Grid including all standard functions used by MSF in the field (MSF INTL tab)
- OC specific Grids showing standard functions used by each OC in the field (separate OC tabs)
- Standard job profiles in 3 languages (English, French, Spanish)
- 2016 IRFFG Standard Job Template
- 2013 IRFFG Implementation Guidelines
- 2015 IRFFG Maintenance Guidelines
- 2017 IRFFG Definitions and Common Language
- 2017 IRFFG Function Codes Conversion Table V.1.2.
- 2017 IRFFG Logistics/ Supply Organigram
- 2018 IRFFG - Requesting A New Function
- 2019 IRFFG Q&A (this document)