

**YAKIMA COUNTY  
CLASSIFICATION AND COMPENSATION POLICY  
POLICY NO. HR-001**

Adopted Copy Available at  
Yakima County Human Resources  
128 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Room B27  
Yakima, WA 98901

**I. PURPOSE**

It is the philosophy of Yakima County to support recruitment and motivation of well qualified, productive employees and to encourage and recognize activities that make a positive difference in the lives of Yakima County residents. The County therefore desires to recruit and retain individuals who demonstrate initiative, high ethical standards, team orientation and a willingness to accept responsibility for performance. The County recognizes that motivation is critical to the success of employees in achieving its overall mission, goals and objectives. Appropriate developmental and advancement opportunities, recognition for above standard performance and support for employee initiative and creative problems solving will motivate employees toward achievement of County goals.

To support this philosophy Yakima County brings together the elements of timing, public and employee relations, planning, organization, and legal concerns in the complex set of management tools which comprise the Yakima County Classification and Compensation System. These management tools include a classification structure which defines the body of work performed and a compensation structure which provides fair and equitable compensation for that work and policies and procedures to provide administrative oversight.

This policy supersedes all previous Classification and Compensation Policies prior to this version. Provisions of negotiated labor contracts which conflict with this policy take precedence over this policy to the extent applicable.

**II. COMPENSATION**

**A. STATEMENT OF POLICY**

It is the policy of Yakima County to establish a compensation system that will allow the County to effectively compete for qualified personnel and to ensure that salaries are equitable and commensurate with the duties performed by each employee.

A salary schedule (pay plan) shall be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners and shall apply to all employees, excluding those positions designated as Direct Reports and Elected Officials. Copies of the salary schedules (pay plans) are available in the Human Resources Department and County website.

Frequency of step advancements and eligibility to advance steps shall be according to the provisions of the applicable pay plan as approved and adopted by resolution by the Board of County Commissioners and/or relevant collective bargaining agreements.

As individual positions are studied through the Decision Band Method (DBM) of job evaluation, they will be allocated to classifications within the DBM classification structure and placed in the appropriate DBM Pay Plan.

## B. DECISION BAND METHOD PAY PLANS

1. **Philosophy:** Based upon the Decision Band Method of job evaluation, the Yakima County Compensation Structure shall reflect both internal equity and external parity with the labor markets in which the County must compete. Compensation structure recommendations shall include consideration of the salary range structure as well as all other compensation received by employees.
2. **Base Salary Pay Plan Ranges:** All classifications shall have a base salary range which may be modified periodically by the Board of County Commissioners based on labor market data and the County's economic position. The base salary pay plan structure shall reflect the relative internal value relationship of classes as established in the classification structure through the Decision Band Method (DBM) of job evaluation. The County remains committed to ensuring that base salary ranges reflect the comparable labor market. Each base salary range will be divided into 13 data points.
3. **Salary Survey Methodology:** The Board of County Commissioners may periodically decide to update labor market data for their use in establishing base salary ranges for classifications within the DBM classification system. When appropriate, updated labor market data shall be obtained by surveying the County's comparable labor market. The County shall complete an in-depth analysis of the labor market data every 4 years and perform a soft touch on an annual basis to assess overall pay changes of comparable counties as designated in Section 3.2. A soft touch is defined as getting pay information from the six comparable counties that outlines pay changes implemented during that calendar year, pay changes planned for the upcoming year, or pay changes as outlined in current collective bargaining agreements for that organization. Soft touch information will be gathered to align with the County's budget preparation timeline.

The Salary Survey will consist of a Benchmark Job Analysis; a determination of the County's Labor Market; and a Salary Survey Analysis Methodology to analyze Survey data.

- 3.1. **Benchmark Job Analysis:** Benchmark classifications are those County jobs that are likely to have similar characteristics with other organizations and are used as standards against which the pay of other jobs can be compared. Benchmarks utilized for the Salary Survey will be selected using the following guidelines:
  - 3.1.1. Benchmarks should be selected from throughout the DBM structure such that all Bands, Grades, and Subgrades are represented.
  - 3.1.2. Benchmarks should include a minimum of three representative job classifications within each Band, Grade, and Subgrade.
  - 3.1.3. Benchmarks should be fairly accurate representations of all job classifications within each Band, Grade, and Subgrade.

3.1.4. Benchmarks should be readily recognizable by survey participants and should be typical jobs that would exist in the organizations to be surveyed.

3.2 Benchmarks should include job classifications that contain a number of employees.

*Labor Market:* The determination of the County’s labor market(s) is a critical step in obtaining relevant compensation comparables. Yakima County has selected the following counties as comparables:

- Benton County
- Grant County
- Kitsap County
- Spokane County
- Thurston County
- Whatcom County

**Note:** If it’s determined that the assigned comparable counties do not render adequate comparable data for the specified job classification, then Human Resources and the department will determine another relevant government comparable that provides a good match for the specified job classification. The hierarchy of consideration will begin with a review of other counties first, then other government entities such as cities and towns. The Board of County Commissioners will determine the final course of action when needed.

4. ***Salary Survey Analysis Methodology:*** Survey information obtained as a result of the Salary Survey for the following pay grade levels:

- General Pay Plan: A12, A13, B21, B22, B23, B24/B31, B25/B32, B26, C41, C42, C43, C44/C51, C45/C52, D61, D62, D63, D64/D71, D72, E81
- Information Technology Pay Plan: IT22, IT23, IT24, IT25, IT26, IT41, IT42, IT43, IT 44, IT45
- Information Technology Management Pay Plan: ITM1, ITM2
- Engineering Pay Plan: ENG22, ENG24, ENG25, ENG26, ENG41, ENG42, ENG43, ENG44, ENG45
- Engineering Management Pay Plan: ENGMI, ENGM2, ENGM3, ENGM4
- Attorney Pay Plan: ATT1, ATT2, ATT3, ATT4, ATT5

Survey information will be compiled and analyzed in accordance with the following methodology:

- 4.1. An Adjusted Salary for each comparables reported benchmark will be calculated by normalizing the reported wages to an annual salary comprised of a 40-hour work week, a 173.33-hour work month, and a 2,080-hour work year.
- 4.2. A Minimum and Maximum Adjusted Salary will be calculated as follows for each benchmark reported by all respondents.

- 4.2.1. The Minimum Adjusted Salary will be the respondent's lowest reported Adjusted Salary for the benchmark.
- 4.2.2. The Maximum Adjusted Salary will be the respondent's highest reported Adjusted Salary for the benchmark.
- 4.3. The County Low Salary and the County High Salary for each benchmark will be calculated using the corresponding current County Base Pay Plan.
  - 4.3.1. The County Low Salary is the lowest County Salary for the benchmark.
  - 4.3.2. The County High Salary is the highest County Salary for the benchmark.
- 4.4. The average midpoint (50<sup>th</sup> percentiles) of the Minimum and Maximum Salaries will be calculated for each benchmark.
- 4.5. A market trendline for each pay grade level as defined in 4. Salary Survey Analysis Methodology will be created using the average midpoint for each benchmark paygrade; The market trendline will be expressed in terms of a linear equation  $y=mx + b$ .  $y$  = average annual salary midpoint for each benchmark,  $m$  is the slope of the trendline, and  $x$  is the current DBM benchmark paygrade.
  - 4.5.1. The market trendline will be evaluated against the current corresponding pay plan to determine the percentage difference for each benchmark pay grade.
- 4.6. A market trendline for premium pay classifications will be calculated for each benchmark position to determine premium pay as indicated in 7. Market Parity Pay Ranges.
5. ***Salary Range Structure:*** The Yakima County salary range structure shall provide sufficient breadth to recognize increased value to the County.
  - 5.1. Salary range shall consist of the following maximum number of steps for each pay plan:
    - General Pay Plan: 13 steps
    - Information Technology Pay Plan: 13 steps
    - Information Technology Management Pay Plan: 13 steps
    - Engineering Pay Plan: 13 steps
    - Engineering Management Pay Plan: 13 steps
    - Attorney Pay Plan: variable up to 11 steps

5.2. The Range for each Band, Grade, and Subgrade will be calculated by using the market midpoint associated growth for each pay grade and placement at Step 7 for all pay plans.

5.2.1. The Attorney Pay Plan shall be calculated separately using the Market midpoint base salary at Attorney Step 1. Maximum number of steps between each Salary Grade will remain at:

- Attorney I: 5 Steps
- Attorney II: 7 Steps
- Attorney III: 7 Steps
- Attorney IV: 11 Steps
- Attorney V: 5 Steps

6. **Pay Table Structure:** For all pay plans, with the exception of the Attorney Pay plans, the first data point will represent the Entry Salary; The thirteenth data point will represent the Maximum Salary. The range will be created using the Market midpoint rate at Step 7. All steps above and below Step 7 will be calculated by using 2% between each step to create the paygrade.

7. **Market Parity Pay Ranges:** The Board of County Commissioners may establish a market premium for specific classes when there is a situation where the market compensation level is not consistent with the established salary range resulting from the formal job evaluation process used to establish internal equity within Yakima County classifications. The Board of County Commissioners will establish the County's target market compensation position relative to other comparable agencies.

7.1. If the market compensation study determines that the base salary range for a class is 10% or more below Yakima County's target market position for the year, then a market premium amount may be established that approximates the difference between the target market compensation position level and the job rate for the classification. The new salary range will be created using the market premium recommendation. The market premium amount will be added to the entire new salary range for the classification. The base salary range for the classification will remain unchanged.

7.2. Job classifications with market premiums added to the base salary range will continue to be included in all comprehensive surveys of Decision Band Method classifications within the occupational group until such time as the base salary range for the classification is within 10% of the target market level for the classification. The market premium amounts for a classification may change up or down based upon the data received from the market compensation study for the classification. Should the market premium amount fall to less than 10% below the target market compensation position of the County, then the market premium will be eliminated and the salary for the individual position will be the individual's current increment in the base salary grade for the job classification.

8. ***Establishment of Compensation:*** Compensation to employees includes consideration of the salary range structure as well as all other economic benefits received. The Board of County Commissioners, based on the County's economic position and the County's labor market, may choose to implement compensation increases to employees by way of salary increases and/or increases to economic benefits. At such times that the Board decides to grant employee salary increases, the Board may choose one or more of the following:
  - 8.1. Provide Step Increases for those eligible to advance one step if the employee has not reached the maximum step allowed.
  - 8.2. Provide a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) using a designated Consumer Price Index.
  - 8.3. Revise a Salary Range by applying all or part of a market adjustment identified by the Salary Survey Methodology to the pay plans.

### **C. MAINTENANCE OF THE PAY PLANS**

The Human Resources Department shall be responsible for the continuous maintenance and administration of the Yakima County Compensation (Pay) Plans. This will include a periodic review and analysis of rates of pay for similar positions in comparable labor markets, organizations, cost-of-living factors, budgetary considerations, and other related factors. On the basis of this information, the Director of Human Resources shall recommend to the Board of County Commissioners changes to keep the plan current, uniform and equitable. Such changes shall be approved by the Board of County Commissioners and shall then be included in the annual budget.

The Yakima County Compensation System shall include a Decision Band Method Pay Plan for job classifications included in the Decision Band Method Classification System, as well as Pay Plans according to provisions of bargaining agreements for other employee groups.

## **III. YAKIMA COUNTY CLASSIFICATION STRUCTURE**

### **A. PHILOSOPHY**

The Yakima County Classification Structure will reflect meaningful and measurable differences in the levels of work within each occupational group. The classification structure will facilitate internal equity. The classification will designate different levels and categories of work according to the Decision Band Method of job evaluation. The classification structure will be periodically reviewed to ensure that it meets the current needs of operating departments and, also, that it is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing environments. The County will create new classifications and redefine classification responsibilities as needed to ensure responsiveness to organizational and environmental change.

Revision of class specifications and position descriptions within the classification structure shall be made as often as is necessary to provide current information on positions and classes. Position descriptions and classification specifications do not constitute an employment agreement between the County and

employee; and are subject to change as the needs of the County and the requirements of the job change. Examples of duties listed in the classification's specification are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work performed. Omissions of specific statements of duties do not exclude them from the position if the work is similarly related or a logical assignment to the position.

## **B. RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. ***Human Resources Department:*** It shall be the duty of the Human Resources Department to work with the Personnel Committee and Department Heads and Elected Officials to examine the duties of positions, to allocate them to existing or newly created classes, to periodically review the entire classification plan and to recommend modifications to reflect current accepted classification practices, changes in responsibilities of existing positions, and compliance with new laws and regulations. The Human Resources Department will respond to departmental requests for revision of class specifications or development of new class specifications to meet on-going operational requirements of Yakima County. The Human Resources Department shall prepare recommendations for the Board of County Commissioners regarding position reclassification after Decision Band Methodology position review. The Human Resources Department shall assist the Department Head/Elected Official in scheduling any appeal of denied position reclassification requests with the Personnel Committee.
2. ***Department Head/Elected Officials:*** Positions will be reviewed by operating departments on an annual basis to ensure that they meet current needs. Department Heads and Elected Officials shall submit a written recommendation to the Human Resources Department when a new position is requested or the duties of a position are substantially changed, including justification for reclassification, and emphasizing changes in position responsibilities, requirements or decision-making level.
3. ***Personnel Committee:*** The Personnel Committee reviews Classification and Compensation System policy administration issues, makes related recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners, and serves as the reclassification appeal board.
  - 3.1 The Personnel Committee shall consist of a member of the following:
    - Board of County Commissioners – Chair
    - Corporate Counsel
    - Elected Official of a Department
    - Human Resources Director
    - Human Resources Senior Manager (non-voting)
    - Judicial Director or Senior Management
    - Large Department Director or Senior Management
    - Leadership for the request (non-voting)
    - One (1) member from Coalition of Unions, selected by the Union Coalition (non-voting). Union Representative will be specific to the union of the position being discussed.
  - 3.2 Members of the Personnel Committee shall have no term limit and serve at

will.

- 3.3 Upon vacancy, members will be replaced as appointed by the Personnel Committee with the exception of the Union Member.

**C. BROAD CLASSES**

The Yakima County Classification Structure shall generally consist of broad classes that reflect the essential duties and responsibilities performed by incumbents in each class and will include a limited number of narrow classes where appropriate. The classification structure shall provide for career advancement/progression within occupational groups where feasible.

**D. CLASS SPECIFICATIONS**

The Human Resources Department shall maintain class specifications which shall include Class Title, Class Code, Department, Overtime Status, Reporting Structure, Effective Date, Essential Duties (reflecting current typical duties performed), Minimum Qualifications, and Special Requirements. The class specification shall serve as the basis for defining the generic duties of the classification. Copies of class specifications are available in the Human Resources Department and on the County's website.

The Human Resources Department shall maintain documentation regarding specific position descriptions titled Position Description Questionnaires (PDQs). These PDQs provide the basis for customizing recruitment announcements, performance management and appraisal, and to ensure compliance with federal and state employment and safety laws, rules and regulations.

Human Resources and the Elected Official or Department Head will review each PDQ for accurate duty statements, minimum education and experience and DBM classification each time the position is vacated. Recommendation for changes in classification due to changes in duties or organizational structure shall be reviewed by the Personnel Committee prior to recruitment for the vacant position.

**IV. PROCEDURES**

**A. NEW EMPLOYEE HIRING**

New employees may be hired between Step 1 and Step 4 in the appropriate pay grade. Human Resources will review all entry rate offers up to Step 4 of the appropriate pay grade for internal equity and discuss with the Department Head/Elected Official prior to an offer of employment.

The Department Head/Elected Official may hire above Step 4 by requesting an exception to policy. Justification for hiring above the entry rate or other considerations must accompany the request for the exception. Human Resources will review the request for internal equity and discuss with the Department Head/Elected Official prior to the recommendation for approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

**B. PROMOTION PAY RATE**

An employee promoted to a position in a higher pay grade shall have the salary established at a step that provides a minimum of 5% per pay grade increase with a maximum of 15% or Step 1 of the new pay grade if the new salary is more than a 15% increase.

**C. DEMOTION PAY RATE**

1. An employee who is demoted as a disciplinary action shall be placed at the same step level in the lower classification pay range as currently held in the position from which he was demoted. Approval for placement at a higher step level shall require approval of the Board of County Commissioners.
2. An employee who accepts an involuntary demotion for non-disciplinary reasons shall be placed in the step level that is closest to, but not greater than, the pay rate in the class from which demoted.
3. An employee who voluntarily requests a demotion to or applies for a position in a lower classification shall be placed in the compensation system as indicated in Section IV.A: New Employee Hiring.
4. Approval for placement at a higher step level shall require approval of the Board of County Commissioners.

**D. RECLASSIFICATION**

The employee or Department Head may submit to the Human Resources Department a request for reclassification. As the first step in the review, the employee will be asked to complete and return a Position Description Questionnaire and participate in a desk audit to discuss the duties performed. Human Resources will conduct a position review according to the Decision Band Method. A report of recommendations shall be given to the Personnel Committee which may accept, modify, or reject the Human Resources Department recommendations. If the Personnel Committee determines after reviewing the Human Resources Department recommendations that no change is needed for the position, Human Resources will notify the department of the Personnel Committee decision. The Department Head/Elected Official may appeal the Personnel Committee decision or recommendation in person before it is submitted to the Board of County Commissioners. Human Resources shall submit the Personnel Committee recommendation for consideration by the Board of County Commissioners.

The frequency for position reclassification requests shall be limited to once every 12 months from previous review.

The effective date of all reclassifications approved by the Board of County Commissioners will be the first of the pay period following receipt of the signed Action Memo.

**E. RECLASSIFICATION PAY RATE**

1. An employee who is advanced to a higher pay grade through reclassification shall have their salary set in accordance to Paragraph IV.B: Promotion Pay Rate.

2. An employee in a position reclassified to a classification in the same pay range shall receive no increase in pay.
3. An employee in a position reclassified to a lower level shall be placed in compliance with Paragraph IV.C.2: Involuntary Demotion Pay Rate.

**F. STEP DATES:**

Employees will be eligible for a step increase based on their continuous service date. Continuous service dates, which reflect an employee's uninterrupted years of service, may be adjusted for periods of leave without pay unless protected by Federal or State law.

1. Employees hired on or after January 1, 2023, will have their future step date set twelve (12) months from their hire date as shown below:
  - 1.1 Employees hired between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month will have their step date set as the 1<sup>st</sup> of that month.
  - 1.2 Employees hired between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the end of the month will have their step date set as the 16<sup>th</sup> of that month.
2. Employees promoted, advanced by steps, or reclassified will have the effective date of their change on the first of a pay period. The future step date for these employees will be set twelve (12) months from the date of the promotion, step advancement, or reclassification.
3. Steps will continue subject to budget accountability. Budget accountability means if the approximate amount the Employer has available for potential wage increases during that period.

**G. OUT-OF-CLASS PAY**

There are circumstances in which an employee receives compensation for the performance of duties in a higher classification than normally performed. Compensation for working out of classification is provided as a temporary monetary recognition to an employee for the assumption and performance of duties normally performed by an employee of a higher classification. The provisions herein apply to all employees of the County unless existing labor contracts specifically provide for a different out-of-class procedure:

1. The assumption and performance of the duties of the higher classification must encompass a range of responsibilities of the higher classification not included in the current classification.
2. The employee must meet the minimum education, experience, and certification requirements of the higher classification.

The classification must be one identified as in use within the employee's designated department or division.

3. Out-of-class compensation shall not apply to temporary assignments made pursuant to mutual agreement between the employee and supervisor for the purpose of providing training for a mutually agreed upon period of time.
4. Out-of-class compensation shall not apply for coverage of a workstation for a short period of time due to another employee's absence, unless specifically provided for in a collective bargaining agreement. A short period of time is defined as under 30 consecutive days.
5. When the out-of-class assignment is for less than a 30-day period, other miscellaneous hours such as sick or PTO leave, and holiday pay are calculated at the employee's regular base rate.
6. Employees approved to work out-of-class over 30 days are to be paid the higher rate for the approved period. In this instance, other miscellaneous hours are calculated at the out-of-class rate. Approval to pay out-of-class for a period over 30 days must be granted by the Board of County Commissioners.
7. Out-of-class assignments are limited to 6 months at a time, at which point the out of class assignment will be reviewed by the Department Head/Elected Official and Human Resources to determine if a one-time extension is necessary.
8. Out-of-class assignments that exceed 6 months will be reviewed and considered for reclassification.

Out-of-class compensation will be calculated using the following methodology:

- 8.1 **1 Pay Grade Change:** Employee will be compensated at 7.5% increase above the current rate of pay in the employee's regular pay range.
- 8.2 **2 Pay Grade Change:** Employee will be compensated at 15.0% increase above the current rate of pay in the employee's regular pay range.
- 8.3 **3 Pay Grade Change or higher:** Employee will be compensated at 20.0% increase above the current rate of pay in the employee's regular pay range.
- 8.4 **Compensation for interim appointments to Direct Report positions** shall be determined by Action Memo by the Board of County Commissioners.

Out-of-class compensation shall begin the first day of the following pay period in which the notification of approval is received.

## H. REORGANIZATIONS

*"Reorganization"* means a redistribution of duties and responsibilities among two or more positions within a work unit which impacts the classification of the positions. The redistribution may involve the

assignment of new duties to a position, the removal of duties from a position, or the exchange of duties among multiple positions.

When a department initiates a reorganization, Human Resources shall assist by conducting a timely and comprehensive study, identifying and analyzing union issues, effect on employees, fiscal impact, and effect on the Classification and Compensation System. Study recommendations shall be presented in a staff report to the Personnel Committee and Department Head/Elected Official based upon policy, legal and contractual obligations, and best business practice. The Personnel Committee shall recommend reorganization changes to the Board of County Commissioners.

**I. ATTORNEY CLASSIFICATIONS:**

1. For hiring and promotional placement, positions in the Attorney I, II, III, IV and V classifications shall be considered in combination, and they may be filled in any class.
2. The Department Head/Elected Official shall determine the initial hiring classification and step level in the combined attorney classification series based on an assessment of the individual's skill level, experience and academic credentials. Individuals must meet established class minimum qualifications. The hiring step may be up to the top step of the applicable pay range. Funding for the hiring placement must be absorbed within the existing department budget authority and shall not constitute justification for future additional resource allocations.
3. Movement between classifications, or from one step to another step within a classification pay range is considered a promotion and shall be allowed by written recommendation of the Department Head/Elected Official based on skill assessment, performance evaluations and established class minimum qualifications. The promotion step may be up to two steps within the applicable pay range or, in the case of a reclassification, to the lowest step level within the new pay range that provides at least a 5% increase in pay. The employee's step date shall be changed in accordance with this policy, to reflect the effective date of the promotion. Promotions shall be limited to one promotion per 12-month period. Funding for the advancement must be absorbed within the existing department budget authority and shall not constitute justification for future additional resource allocations. The effective date of all promotions approved by the Board of County Commissioners will be the first of the pay period following the receipt of the signed and approved Action Memo.
4. Recommendations for movement between attorney classes or steps shall include, but not be limited to the following skill-based factors:
  - professional growth and development on the job;
  - accumulated experience and skill;
  - experience in two or more major areas of operation;
  - qualified by experience/professional standards for matters of greater gravity or consequences to parties;
  - significant trial experience and/or expertise, with special recognition of jury trial experience;

- assignment of matters of greater gravity and consequences to parties;
- assigned lead status in area of operation; and/or
- assigned formal supervisory or administrative duties.