

CLASSIFICATION AND COMPENSATION PLAN

8.00 CLASSIFICATION PLAN

The Employee Classification and Compensation Plan (Grade and Step) provides the salary structure for classified employees in Hidalgo County. The Classified Position List organizes county positions by title and grade according to level of responsibility. Positions are placed in job classifications that best depict the nature of the work performed. Each job classification has a corresponding salary group assignment that determines the minimum (Step 1) salary rate for each position.

8.01 PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Classification and Compensation plan accomplishes the following objectives:

- 1) Groups position with similar duties and pay while providing a high degree of flexibility to County departments and offices.
- 2) Compensates employees with salaries that are internally equitable and compare favorably with the private sector, other counties, and Texas State Agencies.
- 3) Provides for within grade step increases (Within Grade Step Increase Policy).
- 4) Provides for Career Ladder and Departmental promotions at the department level.

8.02 PLAN APPLICATION

The Classification and Compensation Plan, and the related salary schedule applies to all regular, full-time salaried positions (classified) as authorized by the Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court.

- 1) The Classification and Compensation Plan consists of 21 pay grades and 11 steps. The Department of Human Resources established the grade for each position based on the level of difficulty, level of responsibility, and the qualifications (education and experience) required for the position.
- 2) Each grade has 11 steps that are set at 3.5% intervals. Step 2 is 3.5% higher in salary than Step 1 and Step 3 is 3.5% higher in salary than Step 2 and so on.
- 3) All newly hired (selected or appointed) employees of the County must begin their employment at Step 1 and remain at Step 1 during the required six months probationary period. Employees are not eligible for promotion (employee cannot apply for vacant posted positions) or to transfer to another department or another position during the probationary period.
- 4) An employee who is promoted is guaranteed at least a 3.5% (one-step) salary increase. The employee will be placed at Step 1 of the new grade, or at the next step of the new grade that provides the employee at least a 3.5% salary increase if Step 1 is less than a 3.5% increase.
- 5) An employee who is demoted (voluntarily or involuntarily) to a position in a lower grade, will be placed at the same step as the employee occupied in the higher grade.

8.03 DISCRETIONARY STEPS

New employees are hired at Step 1 of the applicable grade. However, in special circumstances, Elected Officials and Department Heads may request a higher step for a newly hired employee based on certain criteria related to special need or superior qualifications.

- 1) Discretionary Step 2 - All newly hired employees are usually hired at Step 1 of the applicable Classification Plan grade. However, in special circumstances, Elected Officials and Department Heads may request to hire at Step 2 based on a special need of the department or superior qualifications of the prospective employee. The Step 2 discretionary step will be awarded after criteria certification by HR and approval of the step adjustment by Commissioners' Court.
- 2) Discretionary Step Professional – Elected Officials and Department Heads may request to hire above the minimum criteria not to exceed 4 steps when there is an insufficient number of qualified candidates for certain professional positions (Registered Nurses, Engineers, Attorneys, etc.) that require specialized education, significant experience, significant training, and significant skills. The discretionary step will be awarded after criteria certification by the Department of Human Resources and approval of the step adjustment by Commissioners' Court.
- 3) Discretionary Step District Attorney - The District Attorney may request to hire above the minimum criteria not to exceed 5 steps based on a special and compelling need of the department to hire highly qualified Assistant District Attorneys. The discretionary steps will be awarded after criteria certification by HR and approval of the step adjustment by Commissioners' Court.
- 4) Elected Officials and Department Heads must complete and submit Form 8.0301, Request for Discretionary Step(s), to the Department of Human Resources. Requests are subject to Commissioners' Court approval.

8.04 WITHIN GRADE STEP INCREASE

The Classification and Compensation Plan provides for a process for employees to earn salary step increases within their assigned pay grade. The Within Grade Step Increase policy, is intended to provide employees the opportunity for progression through his or her assigned pay grade.

- 1) Step salary increases will be approved during the annual budget preparation process for all employees meeting the eligibility criteria.
- 2) All step salary increases will be certified by the Department of Human Resources and the Department of Budget and Management.
- 3) Awarded step increases will be effective on the first full pay period after adoption of the annual budget.
- 4) Step increases will be subject to the availability of funds projected during the budget process.
- 5) To be eligible for the Within Grade Step Increase salary adjustment, employees must meet the following criteria:
 - a) The employee must be a regular full time employee and must have completed at least twelve (12) consecutive months of service.
 - b) The employee must have a performance rating of "Exceeds Requirements" or better as documented by the employee's immediate supervisor and certified by the department head/official.
 - c) The employee must not have received any serious personnel actions, such as suspension without pay, demotion, or disciplinary probation within the last twelve (12) months from the approval date of the "Incentive Step Increase" process during the annual budget process.