



HIDALGO COUNTY PREMIUM PAY PROGRAM

(Approved September 7, 2021, as Amended September 21, 2021,
as Amended February 8, 2022)

Background

Since the start of the COVID–19 public health emergency in January 2020, County employees (essential workers) have put their physical wellbeing at risk to meet the daily needs of our community and to continue to provide essential services. In the course of this work, many essential workers have contracted or have been exposed to COVID–19. Furthermore, as noted in the American Rescue Plan Act, many essential workers are people of color or low-wage workers. These workers, in particular, have borne a disproportionate share of the health and economic impacts of the pandemic.

The American Rescue Plan Act (2021, ARPA) authorizes Premium Pay to essential employees who have been and continue to be relied on to maintain continuity of operations of essential critical infrastructure sectors, including those who are critical to protecting the health and wellbeing of their communities. All county employees are deemed eligible workers performing essential work during the COVID–19 public health emergency performing essential work. Premium Pay is afforded to remunerate essential workers for the elevated health risks they have faced and continue to face during the public health emergency. To ensure that Premium Pay is targeted to workers that faced or face heightened risks due to the character of their work, the ARPA guidance defines essential work as work involving regular in-person interactions or regular physical handling of items that were also handled by others. A worker would not be engaged in essential work and, accordingly, is not eligible to receive Premium Pay for telework performed from a residence. *See* American Rescue Plan Act, (2021), Interim Final Rule, 31 CFR Part 35, Subpart A § 35.3 Definitions.

Eligible Employees

All regular full-time, regular part-time*, temporary full-time*, and temporary part-time* employees employed by the County who meet the eligibility criteria under ARPA (i.e. in-person work) and who were employed on or before August 1, 2021, are eligible to receive Premium Pay as per the designated award amounts.



Hidalgo County • Department of Budget & Management

American Rescue Plan Act 2022

Additionally, all regular full-time, regular part-time*, temporary full-time*, and temporary part-time* employees employed by the County who meet the eligibility criteria under ARPA (i.e. in-person work), who were hired on August 2, 2021, but previously worked for Hidalgo County for twelve continuous months during the declared emergency issued March 17, 2020, are eligible to receive Premium Pay as per the designated award amounts during the second eligibility period.

Related Agencies may be awarded grants to establish their own Premium Pay Program via an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding, or Subrecipient Agreement, as necessary and only as approved by the Commissioners Court.

Eligibility Period

Premium Pay will be calculated based on the employee's hours physically worked beginning on September 13, 2021, through December 31, 2021. The total amount earned cannot exceed the maximum designated award amount, as noted below. Payouts of Premium Pay will be made on or after November 19, 2021.

Second Eligibility Period

Premium Pay will be calculated based on the employee's hours physically worked beginning upon Commissioners Court approval (February 8, 2022) through April 30, 2022. The total amount earned cannot exceed the maximum designated award amount, as noted below. Payouts of Premium Pay will be made on or after May 20, 2022.

The second eligibility period is exclusive for eligible employees who were unable to complete their maximum allowable hours during the first eligibility period and eligible employees who were hired on August 2, 2021, but previously worked for Hidalgo County for twelve continuous months during the declared emergency issued March 17, 2020.

Premium Pay Award Amount

For Regular Full-Time Employees, Premium Pay will be awarded at a rate of \$13.00 per hour in addition to wages or remuneration the worker otherwise receives and in an aggregate amount not to exceed the tiered amount below:

- \$3,500 for eligible employees earning under \$40,000
- \$3,000 for eligible employees earning between \$40,001 - \$60,000



Hidalgo County • Department of Budget & Management

American Rescue Plan Act 2022

- \$2,500 for eligible employees earning over \$60,000

*Regular Part-Time, Temporary Full-Time, and Temporary Part-Time Employees will be awarded Premium Pay at 50% of the amount shown above, depending on their earnings tier.

Exclusion to Eligible Employees

- Employees working from a residence (i.e. telework)
- WIC Program
- Elected Officials (salaries set by Statute and subject to publication requirements)
- Employees hired on August 2, 2021