



COMPENSATING EMPLOYEES - Represented

Policy: POL-826-HR • Effective Date: September 15, 2025 • Res. #: 089500
Cancels: Res. 077274 • Reference: None

Unless otherwise covered by a bargaining unit agreement, this policy applies to all positions related to the Courthouse, Road, and Solid Waste bargaining units.

Definitions:

BOCC – Board of County Commissioners

Classification – a set of positions connected by similar purpose, function, responsibility, authority and qualifications

Current Salary – the total compensation an employee has been receiving for a period of not less than six months

Rounded Step Date – a date indicating eligibility for some wage and benefit increases. The rounded step date for employees beginning a new position between the 1st and 15th of the month will be the first of that month. Start dates between the 16th and end of the month indicate a rounded step date on the first of the following month.

1. A Compensation Plan Shall be Maintained for all Classifications

A compensation plan shall be maintained on all classifications for the following purposes:

- Equal pay for equal work as provided by law
- Create an appropriate salary structure for recruitment and retention
- Provide a means of rewarding employees for good performance
- Establish internal equality between classifications
- Review and establish external equitable relationships

The compensation plan shall consist of job classifications and the approved salary range for each classification. It shall include a description of premium pay, opportunity for movement through a salary range, and the effects of personnel movement such as promotion, demotion, transfer, and reassignment.

2. Salary Ranges are Determined Using External Market Sources and Internal Alignment

Salary ranges are determined using a comparison of similar classifications found in external market entities. External entities shall be made primarily of five to seven Eastern Washington counties comparable in population, assessed value and General Fund revenue, but may be adjusted to include other entities (public or private) when a sufficient position comparison cannot be made. A sufficient comparison includes similar classification in at least three market entities.

Classifications will not necessarily be tied directly to external market data. Significant emphasis is placed on internal alignment in order to maintain equity between classifications and meet legal requirements.

Human Resources shall conduct classification surveys and reviews for each classification every three to five years. Classifications may be surveyed all at once, divided by employee group or on an individual basis when necessary.

Surveys are used for various purposes including salary range placement, classification and re-classification, negotiations, and as a consideration in wage adjustments.

3. A Salary Range is Assigned to Each Classification

Salary ranges are set in increments of 2% steps and are identified using the appropriate job family title. Steps are labeled using a numerical system.

With a satisfactory performance review, employees will move between steps every twelve (12) months.

New hire probationary periods are unrelated to step progression, except that an employee must pass his/her probationary period before being eligible for a step increase.

Step dates round to the first of the month if starting in a position before the 16th of the month. Otherwise step dates round to the first of the following month.

4. Employees Must Pass a Performance Review Before Step Movement

Employees must receive a satisfactory performance rating of at least “Meets Expectations” before receiving a step increase. Performance reviews related to step increases must be completed prior to the scheduled step date.

Employees not receiving a satisfactory review will be evaluated no later than every six months. Employees may move forward a step after a satisfactory evaluation is achieved, as determined by the elected official/department head. Employees not receiving a satisfactory performance review will move to the next step on the 1st of the month following a satisfactory performance review. This date then becomes the employee’s new step date, and he/she is eligible for another step twelve (12) months later.

5. New Hires Shall be Compensated within the Appropriate Salary Range

New employees may be hired at step 1. Elected officials and department heads may request permission from the BOCC to hire a candidate at up to step three (3) if the candidate exceeds the qualifications listed in the job advertisement. Candidates who apply for a position and can demonstrate qualifications and/or certifications relevant to the position exceeding the advertised job skill requirements shall provide the elected official or department head with written documented evidence of the qualifications. Such evidence includes test results, licenses or certifications as appropriate. Experience may be considered if references and documentation of past success in a relevant job demonstrates skills exceeding the minimum requirements in the advertisement. Such written documentation, along with the elected official or department head’s written request and justification, including the reasoning that it is necessary to hire above step one (1), shall be received by Human Resources prior to the hire date

of the applicant. Unlike the non-represented policy, Human Resources and the department will then follow the negotiation process.

Upon BOCC agreement, classifications may be designated “Critical” or “Essential.” The resulting adjustment shall be submitted to the union for approval. After meeting specific criteria, Critical classifications may be placed at a higher salary range in accordance with task TSK-826-5-HR. Classifications deemed Essential may be moved to a higher starting wage within the current salary range in accordance with task TSK-826-6-HR. Current positions within the adjusted classification are also moved to meet the new placement.

The Essential status of each classification will be reviewed every five years to determine if the designation for new hires is still necessary. Upon BOCC agreement, the designation may be removed for new hires. The existing employees will remain at their current step. The proposed removal shall be submitted to the union for approval. Removal of Essential status has no effect on existing employees.

Critical criteria:

- The classification must affect all Whitman County governmental operations or be a required position under State or Federal law.
- The classification must have had at least two (2) recruitment attempts involving at least two (2) weeks in a minimum of two (2) area newspapers, concurrently, fail to produce any successful candidates.
- All other county resource options must be fully explored with Human Resources (i.e.-cross training, reorganization, etc.).
- The county must have a long-term need for the classification.

Essential criteria:

- The classification must affect countywide services.
- The position must have remained unfilled for at least six months.
- At least five (5) recruitment attempts involving at least two (2) weeks in two (2) area newspapers concurrently must fail to produce any successful candidates.
- All other county resource options must be fully explored with Human Resources (i.e.-cross training, reorganization, etc.)
- The county must have a long-term need for the classification.

6. Employees May be Transferred, Promoted, Demoted or Reassigned

Transfers occur when an employee is moved between positions in the same classification or between classifications contained in the same salary range. In the case of a transfer, the employee shall remain at the same range and step. Service time since the employee’s last step continues to be counted toward a movement to the next step.

A promotion occurs when an employee is moved to a position in a classification with a higher maximum salary rate and involves a change in job responsibilities. Human Resources calculates a minimum increase by using the employee’s current salary plus two (2) steps in the current salary range. Using this minimum increase calculation, HR places the promoted employee either at Step 1 or in the closest positive step of the promotion grade range. The service requirement of the new step then begins in accordance with this policy.

Demotions are a disciplinary move from a position of higher classification and maximum salary rate to one of lower salary range. Reassignments are also movement to a lower classification but are done so voluntarily and unrelated to disciplinary action. Employees are moved to the lower salary range but remain at their current step. The service time since the employee's last step will continue to be counted toward a movement to the next step in the salary range. If the demotion/reassignment is reversed by the department head/elected official within six months, and the employee returns to the same position previously held, he/she will remain at the same step.

7. Positions May be Re-classified

Positions re-classified in accordance with policy POL-820-HR have changed substantially enough to warrant a different salary range. Employees shall be moved to the higher or lower range, as determined by the re-classification, but remain at their current step.

8. Lead Workers Receive a Six Percent Increase for Duration of Designation

Department heads/elected officials may assign the designation of "lead worker" to employees leading teams or specific projects that are not a normal part of their classification. During the designation period employees receive a six percent (6%) increase in pay for the hours spent working on the project. When employees cease to function as lead workers, their pay will return to base pay.

9. Employees Working Out-of-Class Receive Additional Pay

It is the responsibility of the elected official/department head to assign work to employees which is within the scope and level of classification of the employee's position. Whitman County recognizes that rare circumstances may occur in which an employee must perform work of a higher classification on a temporary basis.

Employees assigned, in writing, to perform work from a higher classification for longer than thirty calendar days shall be compensated on an hour-by-hour basis at the higher classification's hourly wage based on the employee's current step placement. The compensation shall be based on the employee's current step and be retroactive to the beginning of the pay period in which the employee began performing such duties. Out-of-class pay is a temporary arrangement. When an employee ceases to perform out-of-class, his/her pay returns to its normal rate.

Out-of-class pay does not apply to situations where employees are expected to fill in on an interim basis for co-workers due to employee breaks, vacations less than thirty days long, training, troubleshooting, increased work load, short illnesses/injuries, etc.

Out-of-class pay requiring a budget amendment must be reviewed by Human Resources and approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

10. Temporary Employees are Paid Hourly

Temporary employees are employed at the discretion of the department head/elected official. Wages shall be no lower than Washington State minimum wage and paid on an hourly basis as determined by the department. Temporary employees are not part of the compensation system and are not subject to other provisions of this policy, except they may be promoted to regular positions in accordance with county policy and the appropriate collective bargaining agreement.

11. The Whitman County Classification Committee May Make Recommendations Concerning the Compensation System

The Classification Committee serves as a source of representation, information and appeal for county employees.

The Committee is run by a quorum vote of 50% + 1 of the membership and is comprised of volunteer employees from all areas of Whitman County employment. Members are selected from the following categories and may be changed by a vote of the committee and BOCC approval:

Elected Official	1 member
Management/Non-Represented	4 members
Management/Professional/Non-Represented	1 member
Non-Management/Non-Represented	1 member
Non-Management/Professional/Non-Represented	1 member

Bargaining units who participate in the County’s classification system may each have one member on the committee.

The Human Resources Director is responsible for the compensation system and acts as a resource and advisor to the committee. All other members are appointed by the BOCC to staggered 2-year terms. Members may volunteer to sit for an additional 2-year term before stepping down from membership for a minimum of one year.

During the “step down” time, past members may volunteer to serve as one of the two official advisors (non-voting) positions. In the case where more than two past members volunteer for advisor positions, the Committee members make the appointments with preference given to the past Committee office holders.