



# **Cameron County**

## **Compensation & Classification Policy**

Approved by Commissioners' Court

November 27, 2018

Amended on:  
*February 8, 2019*  
*April 30, 2019*  
*February 18, 2020*  
*August 11, 2020*

# Table of Contents

Plan Overview.....3

Exempt Positions.....3

Philosophy & Objectives .....3

Implementation of Compensation and Classification Plan.....4

General Policies .....4

Hiring.....5

Promotion.....5

Demotion.....6

Transfers.....6

Within Grade Salary Adjustment.....6

Adjustments Considered Through Annual Budget Process.....6

Interim or Acting Assignments.....7

Reclassification.....7

## **Plan Overview**

The Compensation and Classification Plan provides for a new pay grade structure of all positions as authorized by the Cameron County Commissioners' Court. Each job classification has a corresponding salary range from minimum to maximum as approved by the Commissioners Court.

## **Exempt Positions**

The Compensation and Classification plan does not apply to elected officials or to the following for reasons that their positions are appointed, their salaries are set by other governing bodies, they abide by separate pay plans, **or the exemption has been approved by Commissioners' Court:**

### *Section Amended on April 30, 2019*

- 1) Juvenile Probation Department
- 2) Office of the County Auditor
- 3) Court Reporters of the District Courts
- 4) Non-clerical staff of the District Attorney's Office
- 5) Grant-funded positions (all or majority)
- 6) Part time, temporary, seasonal, contract positions
- 7) Extension Agents

### **8) Health Authority**

*Section Amended on February 8, 2019*

### **9) Chief Deputy (District and County Clerk, Tax Assessor-Collector)**

*Section Amended on April 30, 2019*

### **10) Court Reporters of the County Courts at Law**

*Section Amended on August 11, 2020*

## **Philosophy & Objectives**

The County strives to provide a total compensation program that is competitive among all peer and competitor organizations in the defined marketplace.

Benchmarking of classifications is used as a best practice for compensation of similar positions.

Competitive ranges are established, based on a combination of market conditions and internal relationships, for classifications to provide the flexibility needed to address the changing needs of the County.

Starting pay for new employees is based upon education and work experience related to minimum position requirements, additional compensable factors identified prior to the recruitment and market conditions.

Employees are eligible for pay increases resulting from promotions and reclassifications to a class in a higher pay grade.

Part-time/temporary or other casual employees may not be eligible for the same level of benefits as full-time employees.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Affordable Care Act (ACA) and any other legal requirements will be consistently and fairly applied to positions.

To ensure that Cameron County compensation structure remains competitive, pay ranges for all positions are reviewed as needed.

## **Implementation of Compensation and Classification Study**

Internal Equity/Decompression Adjustments as a result of the implementation of this system-wide study shall not be subject to the same guidelines as the “Reclassification” guidelines, nor are they tied to any other existing or proposed policies governing salary adjustments. Internal Equity/Decompression Adjustments are the result of the application of a formula, applied to all positions in the same pay plan and are administered to insure that employees’ salaries are internally equitable. They do not reflect an individual “job audit” of a single member incumbent “reclassification”, “promotion” or “demotion”. Internal Equity/Decompression Adjustments are not tied to performance measures.

## **General Policies**

The following addresses both the implementation of the plan as well as the on-going administration/maintenance. This section does not cover all Personnel Policies of the County, only those considered to be relevant specifically to the implementation and administration/maintenance of the new Compensation and Classification Plan. It is important to note that for this new classification/compensation structure to maintain internal equity and external competitiveness, it is necessary for there to be a central control (gatekeeper) that will retain an objective overall organizational perspective. This function should reside with the Human Resources Department. This is widely considered not only “best practice” but is typically where this authority resides in public sector organizations. This authority can be over-ridden by the Commissioners’ Court.

## **Hiring**

*All hires must be executed following the Cameron County Personnel Policies Manual and/or the Cameron County Civil Service Rules and Regulations and are dependent on budgeted funds being available.*

When a position becomes vacant, the salary associated with the position will automatically revert to the minimum salary of the pay grade established by the Compensation and Classification Plan.

1. The hire rate for a new employee with no additional equivalent and relevant level experience is at the entry level of the salary range to which the classification is assigned.

2. Department Heads may request a higher entry level salary for a new employee based on equivalent and relevant work experience. The Human Resources Department will do reference and work experience checks on those employees that are requested to have starting salaries above the minimum of the grade. The Human Resources Department must approve any starting salary request for a new employee above the minimum. Salary adjustments above the minimum of the grade will be calculated by adding one percent per year of equivalent and relevant work experience completed with a maximum of 10%.

3. Only the Commissioners' Court can approve a starting salary that exceeds an amount as determined by this section.

## **Promotion**

*All promotions must be executed following the Cameron County Personnel Policies Manual and/or the Cameron County Civil Service Rules and Regulations and are dependent on budgeted funds being available.*

1. When an employee is promoted, as a result of a competitive appointment to a vacant position assigned to a higher pay grade, the salary placement within the new pay grade shall be determined as follows: apply **5%** of the salary of the previous grade for promotions of one pay grade, and an additional **2.5%** for each additional pay grade. The resulting required increase in pay will be no less than the minimum of the new pay grade and no less than a **5%** salary increase but not more than **10%** or the maximum salary of the assigned pay grade, whichever is less. If the employee would be eligible for placement within the new grade at a level greater than **10%**, based on the same criteria established to determine placement of an outside applicant within the grade at hire, the employee may be offered that salary based on prior approval from the Human Resources Department.

### ***Section Amended on February 8, 2019***

2. The hourly rate of an employee will be the basis for calculating the pay increase when the promotion results in a change in hours worked.

## **Demotion**

*All demotions must be executed following the Cameron County Personnel Policies Manual and/or the Cameron County Civil Service Rules and Regulations.*

A demotion occurs when an employee is moved from a position in one classification to a position in another classification and the new classification is in a pay grade that is lower than the pay grade of the original classification.

When an employee is demoted to a lower pay grade for discipline reasons, or at their own voluntary request, the employee shall **be compensated using the years of experience in their current job at the lower pay grade.** If the employee is subsequently promoted to a classification at or below the grade of the class from which they were demoted, their salary should remain the same, except that the employee must be at least at the minimum of the grade.

*Section Amended on February 8, 2019*

## **Lateral Transfer & Transfer From a Position Outside of the Plan**

*All lateral transfers must be executed following the Cameron County Personnel Policies Manual and/or the Cameron County Civil Service Rules and Regulations.*

A lateral transfer occurs when an employee moves from a position **within the plan** to a different position **within the plan** in the same pay grade, regardless of title. Because there is no change in pay grade there shall be no adjustment in base salary. A lateral transfer is considered neither a reclassification nor a promotion.

**If a full time employee of Cameron County transfers from a position without an assigned pay grade to a position with an assigned pay grade, the Human Resources Department will evaluate and compare the employee's previous position(s) held to the new position and establish an experience date used to determine the employee's salary. If the determined experience date commends a salary higher than the minimum of the pay grade, the Human Resources Department shall provide documentation for processing the transfer.**

*Section Amended on February 18, 2020*

## **Within Grade Salary Adjustment**

An adjustment to an employee's salary within the grade may be made based on criteria pre-established through collaboration with and approval from the Human Resources Department. These criteria may include licensure/certification, advanced education or other objectively verifiable measure that is not required for qualification and that enhances the employee's value to the County. Other employees, in similarly functioning positions in the same classification, meeting the same criteria should be adjusted in the same manner.

## **Adjustments Considered Through Annual Budget Process**

Should the Commissioners' Court consider adjusting employee salaries through the annual budget process, each of following shall be met:

1. Employee must have worked at least 365 days in the current position by the first day of the forthcoming fiscal year
2. Employee shall have received no written documentation in the last 365 days (excluding verbal and written verbal reprimands)
3. The Department Head must have an employee evaluation and a recommendation to adjust salary form submitted to the Human Resources Department

## **Interim or Acting Assignment**

If a vacancy or approved long-term absence occurs and there is an operational need to continue services or activities associated with the position, regardless of the budget status of the position, a regular employee, who is found to be qualified for work by the Human Resources Department, may be assigned by the Department Director to temporarily assume a substantial portion of the duties of the position provided that employee meets the minimum qualifications required for the position.

If the interim or "acting" assignment is to a position in a higher pay grade and extends beyond 30 days, but less than 6 months, the change in pay shall be determined using the same guidelines proscribed for a promotion. Employees receiving temporary assignment pay shall sign a document acknowledging that they are receiving "Interim/Acting Assignment Pay" and also acknowledging that when the temporary assignment ends, the "assignment pay" will also end and they shall return to their previous salary adjusted for any salary changes for which the employee was otherwise eligible.

## **Reclassification**

With the adoption of the new compensation pay grade structure and the internal realignment of classifications, as well as individual incumbents to the correct job assignment, reclassification of job/incumbents should be a rare occurrence.

Should a department head request a reclassification for a position within their department, they must provide fully documented substantiation of a dramatic and substantial work change. The Human Resources Department will do a desk audit of the position and other positions within the work unit to determine if the change in duties and core functions is sufficient to warrant placement in another job title at a higher or lower level.

New job titles, for the most part, will not be adopted. It is a conscious decision on the part of the County to streamline the classification system and to have a “top down” approach to classification. This is characterized by placing work within the existing structure in a more broadly defined classification that is substantially similar to type, scope and level of responsibilities to the work being performed. The reclassification of any position that falls within the scope of the new pay grade structure shall require Commissioners’ Court approval.