



**INCORPORATED COUNTY OF LOS ALAMOS  
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE GUIDELINE**

LOS ALAMOS  
where discoveries are made

Index No. 1175  
Revised June 1, 2017

Effective July 1, 2015

**COMPENSATION ADMINISTRATION**

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Compensation Administration policy is to document the policies and procedures that will be followed in the administration of the County's Compensation and Classification program. It is intended to provide all County employees with a clear understanding of how compensation will be administered and how they may expect to progress within the County's compensation structure as a result of various employment actions, to provide County managers and supervisors with the guidelines and procedures that will be applied by the Human Resources division and the County Manager's Office when administering compensation, and to ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of the policies governing classification and compensation.

The Compensation and Classification program is administered in compliance with the County's Administrative Procedure Guidelines on Equal Employment Opportunity Policy, which affords equal opportunity for all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability, veteran status or other protected classes.

II. Policy

The County Charter, County Code and Personnel Rules and Regulations provide the basic framework through which the Classification and Compensation program is maintained and administered.

Under this framework, the County Manager is required to establish, maintain and publish a complete set of job classifications and descriptions that must be reviewed no less frequently than once every four (4) years. Establishment of new or revised job classes and the abolishment of existing classes are subject to approval by Council. Additionally, the Human Resources Manager is required to conduct salary surveys of the compensation plan no less frequently than once every four (4) years, which the County Manager in consultation with the Personnel Board, uses to make compensation plan recommendations to Council.

### Compensation Philosophy

The purpose of Los Alamos County's compensation philosophy is to define a competitive total compensation approach that enables Los Alamos County to achieve its overall mission, vision and goals.

The County is committed to providing a compensation program that is market competitive, that provides a good balance of compensation, benefits and rewards, and that enables the County to recruit, retain and reward a high performing and motivated workforce that supports the County's commitment to serve its citizens.

In determining market competitiveness, the County considers peer employers of similar size, providing similar services, and in similar industries. Different geographic labor markets are considered as follows:

Local/Statewide: Grades 101 to 124  
Statewide/Southwest Regional: Grades 125 to 132, and 201 to 214  
National: Grades 301 and above

The County's competitive market positioning and total compensation package, has enabled the County to attract and retain a well-qualified and motivated workforce that is capable of sustaining the County's wide range of essential services and infrastructure. A regional Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics established cost factor may be recommended to Council annually for application to the compensation plan structure.

The County maintains approximately 235 job classes and descriptions within an overall structure of job families, and takes into account both the external market value of benchmarked jobs and the internal value of non-benchmarked jobs when assigning job classes to salary grades. In general, each job class is assigned to the salary grade whose midpoint of the range most closely matches the combination of target market positioning and internal positioning of the job class within its job family.

### Compensation Plan Structure

The compensation plan structure consists of 56 salary grades into which all job classes are assigned. Generally speaking there is a 5% difference between grades. Each grade represents a market salary range, and all job classes that are assigned to the same salary grade will have the same salary range. This compensation plan structure is also referred to as the salary plan.

There are 3 grade series within the salary plan; the 100 series for non-exempt, the 200 series for exempt, and the 300 series for executive jobs, and these series broadly align with labor market strategy and recruitment policy. Progression through the salary range is determined by a step plan consisting of 40 steps of approximately one-percent.

#### Initial Hiring Placement

Employees are initially placed within the salary range for their job based on their individual combination of experience, education, and ability to meet business needs that are related to the job requirements.

#### Progression through the Range – Regular & Limited Term Employees

Once placed, regular and limited-term employees then progress through the salary range for their job primarily based on their individual annual performance ratings, with limited recognition also given for the completion of an additional educational degree beyond the minimum job requirements, and non-temporary job expansions, such as the addition of a new program or service.

#### Progression through the Range – Casual Employees

Once placed, casual employees then progress through the salary range for their job based on the number of hours worked during the previous twelve months that exceed the defined threshold.

#### Placement & Alignment Limitations

In no case shall step placement be above the maximum step for the grade.

Market factors may cause a job to change in grade, as determined by formal market study or internal job reevaluation. When a job decreases in grade, and should this cause an employee's salary to exceed the new range, the principle of causing no harm to the employee is generally applied and the employee may be frozen in place (i.e. 'red-circled' or 'grandfathered') until future market factors bring the salary back into alignment within the range. Conversely, when a job increases in grade, and should this cause an employee's salary to fall below the minimum of the range, a market adjustment is customarily applied to bring the employee's salary up to the first step within the grade. When jobs change in grade due to market factors and the employee's salary remains within the range of the new grade, any market adjustment made will be contingent on budget availability.

### III. Responsibility

The County Manager must approve this policy and any changes thereto. The County Manager is responsible for the implementation and procedural requirements of this policy, administration of this policy is delegated to the Human Resources Manager.

### IV. Procedures

#### Step Placement of Newly Hired Employees (Non-Collective Bargaining Agreement employees)

Employees are initially placed at step one within the salary range for the job class; the following placement criteria are then applied:

- 1) One and one half steps (rounded up to the next whole step) are granted per full-time equivalent year of experience exceeding minimum requirements *doing the same or a substantially similar job*.
- 2) Two steps are granted for the possession of each degree i.e. associate's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree or doctoral degree in a major *related* field that exceeds the minimum education requirements for the job, up to a maximum of four steps in total. Partial credits towards degree completion will not be counted for this evaluation, with the exception that sixty or more credits from an accredited institution will be granted the equivalency of an associate's degree.
- 3) Upon written recommendation of the Department Director, the Human Resources Manager is granted the authority to consider and award up to five additional discretionary steps for additional relevant and documented qualifications, certifications, experience, and ability to meet business needs related to the job requirements.
- 4) Additional discretionary steps beyond the above criteria and all appointments above step 20 require documented business justification for approval by the County Manager/Utilities Manager.

#### Step Placement of Newly Hired Probationary Fire Operations Employees

Initial placement will be indexed below step A of the Firefighter II step plan.

- a. Probationary Firefighter II will be 95% of Firefighter II Step A. Upon assignment to shift they will increase to Firefighter II Step A.
- b. Probationary Firefighter I will be 90% of Firefighter II Step A. Upon assignment to shift they will increase to 95% of Firefighter II Step A.
- c. Probationary Fire Cadet will be 88% of Firefighter II Step A. Upon assignment to shift they will increase to 90% of Firefighter II Step A. Upon promotion to Firefighter I they will increase to 95% of Firefighter II Step A.

#### Step Placement of Newly Hired Probationary Utilities Employees Whose Job Titles are identified in their Respective Collective Bargaining Agreement

Initial placement will receive the job rate identified in the Collective Bargaining Agreement(s).

#### Collective Bargaining Agreement Promotions

Fire Promotions will be according to the collective bargaining agreement.

Utilities Promotions will be to the job title rate as identified in the collective bargaining agreement(s).

#### Step Placement of Newly Promoted Regular and Limited Term Employees

Employees are be placed on a step within the salary range based on the following matrix:

Employment Action	Movement	Increase Percentage
1 grade promotion	Move to greater of same step in new grade, or new hire step placement	~5%
2 grade promotion	Move to greater of 3 steps lower in new grade, or new hire placement	~7%
3 grade promotion	Move to greater of 6 steps lower in new grade, or new hire placement	~9%
4 grade promotion	Move to greater of 9 steps lower in new grade, or new hire placement	~11%
5 grade promotion	Move to greater of 12 steps lower in new grade, or new hire placement	~13%
6 grade promotion	Move to greater of 15 steps lower in new grade, or new hire placement	~15%
7 grade promotion	Move to greater of 18 steps lower in new grade, or new hire placement	~17%

#### Step Placement Due to Market Realignment

When an employee's salary falls below the job grade due to market changes, the salary will normally be brought within the range by placing the employee on step one of the range. Any further realignment resulting from market changes is dependent on available funding.

#### Annual Step Advancement based on Performance Planning & Appraisal (PPA) Rating for Regular and Limited Term Employees

Subject to annual approval and budget funding of the salary plan:

1. Employees on the top step of their pay grade are frozen in place, and may only be eligible for any cost factor applied to structure.
2. Employees receiving a rating of 'Far Exceeds Expectations' may be granted a three-step increment plus any cost factor applied to structure.

July 1, 2015

3. Employees receiving a rating of 'Exceeds Expectations' may be granted a two-step increment plus any cost of labor factor applied to structure.
4. Employees receiving a rating of 'Meets Expectations' may be granted a one-step increment plus any cost factor applied to structure.
5. Employees receiving a rating of 'Does Not Meet Expectations' or 'Unsatisfactory' will not be granted any step increment, except for any cost factor applied to structure.

#### Annual Step Advancement Based on Hours Worked for Casual Employees

Subject to annual approval and budget funding of the salary plan:

1. Casual employees who have worked more than 400 hours during the prior year will be eligible to receive a one-step increase.
2. Casual employees who are Lifeguards and instruct water aerobics class but do not provide lifeguarding duties; who have current Aquatic Exercise Association (AEA) Certification and have worked more than 150 hours in the prior year will be eligible to receive a one-step increase.
3. Pay increases will become effective in the first full pay period beginning on or after July 1.

#### Out of Annual Cycle Step Increments for Regular, Limited Term and Casual Employees

Subject to approval of the County Manager or Utilities Manager (under Personnel Rule 305), and in accordance with budget availability, out-of-annual-cycle step increments may be granted in recognition of the following *non-temporary* job changes:

1. Up to three steps may be granted for a non-temporary job expansion such as the absorption of a documented new program or service, or an expansion of job responsibilities *from an equivalent or higher level job* due to attrition or reorganization.
2. Two steps may be granted for completion of an Associates, Bachelors, Masters or Doctorate in a major *related* field that exceeds the minimum education requirements for the job, up to a maximum of four total steps.
3. The County Manager, or the Utilities Manager in the case of Department of Public Utilities employees, may grant salary changes based upon Department Director recommendations as appropriate in accordance with Personnel Rule 305.11
4. Corrective steps may be granted as a result of adverse impact analysis (e.g. age, race, gender etc.) as recommended by the HR Manager.

#### Lateral Transfer

Lateral transfers will be applied in accordance with Personnel Rule 308.7.

#### Demotion

Salary changes related to demotion will be applied in accordance with Personnel Rules 308.3 and 308.4.

Prepared by: County Manager's Office

  
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