

# DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYEE RELATIONS



Procedure

Revised August 18, 2006

## ***Reclassifications, Reallocations and Title Changes: Approach and Procedures***

### — Summary —

This document provides the principles and practices associated with reclassifications, reallocations and title changes of jobs in City government. Specific issues addressed include the factors reviewed by DER in assessing the merits of a request, the procedure for initiating requests, and various steps in the study process.

### Description

#### **Introduction**

The City of Milwaukee's compensation system strives to establish and maintain an internally equitable and externally competitive pay structure that effectively attracts, retains, and motivates employees. Principles we seek to achieve include "equal pay for equal work" and a labor market position that enables the City to recruit and retain a well-qualified and diverse workforce. Naturally all of this must occur within the confines of the City's ability to pay.

#### **Classifications**

A "classification" is a group of individual jobs within an occupational field that have duties sufficiently similar in nature and level to enable the City to title them the same. As a result, the terms "classification" and "job title" can be used interchangeably. This does not mean that all jobs sharing a classification are absolutely identical. The "mix" of duties and responsibilities may vary, as may the relative frequency with which certain tasks are performed. The key is that the jobs are enough alike with respect to the nature and level of work performed to permit the use of comparable requirements, use of the same eligible list for selection and equitable inclusion within the same pay range. This also recognizes that some individual positions within a classification may be somewhat "stronger" than others. The operative phrase is "sufficiently similar."

Under City Service Commission Rule II, "a presumption exists that jobs are properly classified." Jobs can have significant and permanent changes, however, and so requests are made to have jobs studied for a possible reclassification, reallocation or title change. These studies, depending in which department the position is located, come before the City Service Commission or the Fire and Police Commission. The reports are then sent to the Finance and Personnel Committee for review and approval.

### **Reclassifications**

Reclassifications involve a change in title and pay range. Under City Service Commission Rule II a reclassification can only occur when a factual finding is made "that major changes have occurred in level and duties and responsibilities of the job. In other words, that it has become a fundamentally different job. This is the factual basis upon which the Commission may reclassify jobs."

This same Rule goes on to indicate "Factors the Commission will not consider in classification appeal cases: the volume of work being performed; technological changes which alter the way the work is done rather than the work itself; individual job performance; individual qualifications of the appellant; and seniority in the job or length of service with the City." This means that we classify the position, not the employee who is currently filling the position.

It is important to note that reclassifications (and reallocations) can be downward as well as upward. In some cases, responsibilities are reduced or removed and this can result in a recommendation to downgrade the position. In other cases, duties may have been added, but the scope and level of these duties are still commensurate with those performed by others in the classification. This would result in a recommendation for no change in the classification of the position.

### **Reallocations**

Reallocations, unlike reclassifications, do not involve a change in title but do involve a change in pay range. Due to a change in the level of duties and responsibilities performed we may recommend a change in pay range but recommend the title stay the same if it is a good fit and there are no other positions with the same title. Other times, we may find that the rate being paid by the City is no longer competitive in the labor market. When significant recruitment and retention problems are clearly documented, we have the ability to reallocate positions even though there are not any changes in the level of duties and responsibilities performed.

### **Title Changes**

Title Changes involve just changing the title of a position and not the pay range. This can happen when the level of duties and responsibilities have not substantially changed to justify a change in pay but the position may have evolved so that the current title no longer reflects the basic function or nature of work of the position.

### **Paying for Reclassifications and Reallocations**

City departments are required to absorb any additional costs arising from a reclassification or reallocation within their existing budget allocation.

### **The Reclassification/Reallocation/Title Change Process**

Requests for a reclassification, reallocation or title change may be initiated by DER, City department heads, through collective bargaining with Unions, the Mayor's Office or by policy bodies, such as the Common Council, the City Service Commission or the Fire and Police Commission.

Before initiating formal written requests, departments often find it useful to meet with DER to discuss the matter informally. This can facilitate planning and help to ensure that all appropriate bases are covered in advance. Sometimes, other options might be available to address the issues in a less costly way.

Requests should be addressed to Andrea Knickerbocker, Human Resources Manager; Department of Employee Relations, City Hall, Room 706; 200 East Wells Street; Milwaukee, WI 53202. The request letter should document the rationale or justification for the request in terms of the following:

- Changes to duties and responsibilities
- Changes in the level of work as defined by: knowledge, skill, mental or physical effort requirements, responsibility level, or working conditions
- Program, policy, or organizational changes that have impacted the position and its responsibility level
- Documented recruitment or retention difficulties (if applicable)
- Titles of other positions within the city that may be comparable to the position(s) to be studied
- The impact of this change on other positions in the department
- Any other relevant information

The letter should be accompanied by an up-to-date job description. For reclassifications and reallocations a completed Job Analysis Questionnaire should also be included. A Job Analysis Questionnaire is not required for new positions or requests for a title change. The Job Analysis Questionnaire; and Job Description forms and guidelines are available on the City's Intranet "MINT". If needed, the Compensation Services staff is available to assist with obtaining the forms.

Following receipt and review of the request, job audit interviews are scheduled, typically with the employee(s) and immediate supervisor(s). In larger or more complex studies, other parties would also be interviewed. The purpose of these job audit interviews is to discuss such things as:

1. The primary duties and responsibilities.
2. Any changes which may have occurred.
3. How the job "fits into" the organization.
4. The arguments in support of a reclassification, reallocation or title change.
5. Other information as may be pertinent to the case.

By this time, the Analyst assigned to the study will have gathered additional written information, including prior studies, organizational charts, consultant studies (where applicable), announcement sheets, pay survey data (where relevant), work samples and other information deemed to be useful. The above constitutes the data-gathering phase of the study.

The next step involves analysis. Here, we evaluate the position in comparison to other positions in the City's work force (both within and outside the department). The specific factors taken into account depend on the scope and nature of the study. Factors that may be considered include:

- The amount and type of training and experience required to do the job.
- The physical and mental demands involved.
- The degree of independence and consequence of error.
- The impact of the job on the organization.
- The degree of latitude the position has in making decisions or effective recommendations.
- The extent to which various knowledges, skills and/or abilities may be required.
- The extent to which the position is authorized to commit City resources.
- The visibility and relationships responsibilities inherent in the job.
- The extent to which the position functions as a resource for others.
- The physical environment in which the position functions, as well as any unusual hazards that may be present.
- The compensation level of the position compared to the relevant labor market.

The focus of the analysis is to determine whether the work performed has changed to a sufficient extent to conclude it has become a fundamentally different job and the level of duties and responsibilities no longer fit the existing classification. The standard is not change alone, since virtually all jobs "evolve" over time. The key is significant change in the level of work being performed.

If we find that significant change has taken place, our second point of inquiry is to determine the source of the new responsibilities. The most frequent sources can be categorized as follows:

Expanded Service Levels: Frequently, the City becomes engaged in providing new or expanded public services. For example, in the Health Department, new programs involving immunization, lead abatement and mammography screening have been added over the years. While line staff has been added to handle the day to day administration of the grants, the responsibilities for overall management and coordination of these programs has been delegated to existing Health Department staff. In some cases these expanded services have resulted in staff members absorbing a significant increase in the scope of their responsibilities and a reclassification was recommended.

Reorganizations: From time to time, departments reorganize the structure and/or workflow of their organization. A case in point involved the reorganization of the Forestry Division in the mid 1990's. Two separate units—trees and boulevards—were merged into a single entity. Employees of both units were cross-trained to handle both functions. This resulted in a much more flexible workforce and significant cost savings to the City. Since the job duties and

responsibilities changed significantly for some of the positions some reclassifications were recommended.

Increasing Complexity in the World of Work: The revolution in technology has resulted in an upgrade in the skills required for many City occupations. One area where this has impacted the City involves automated systems. While most office employees are offered the opportunity to become computer literate—and while doing so is not a basis for reclassification—service demands have required some employees to develop extremely high levels of expertise. This includes employees involved in the administering of local area networks (LAN's), training new workers, customizing software to meet specific internal applications, or “troubleshooting” various computer problems. A number of reclassifications have been recommended over the years for individuals who regularly apply advanced computer skills as part of their job. These responsibilities were generated by and emerged with the technology.

Position Eliminations: During the last several years, a significant number of City positions have been eliminated. In many cases, these position eliminations have not been accompanied by a corresponding reduction of services. The result has been that other staff, and, in some cases, advanced technology, has had to pick up the additional workload. In some instances, responsibilities have been delegated upward, a phenomena which typically has no classification impact. In other cases, responsibilities have been delegated downward.

If added duties and responsibilities resulting from position eliminations are at basically the same level as the work typically performed by the employees in the existing classification, a reclassification would not be recommended. In fact, the City Service Commission Rules specifically exclude "volume of work" as a criterion for reclassification. However, if the added duties and responsibilities are clearly outside the scope of work performed by employees in that classification, and are at a significantly higher level, we typically recommend in support of reclassification. Classification studies are intended to provide a fair and systematic process to address internal equity issues in the workplace.

### **Report Preparation, Distribution and Approval Process**

Once the analysis phase is completed, a draft report with a recommendation is prepared and sent to the department head or representative with an invitation for comments or questions. Additional meetings or discussions may be held if there is disagreement on the recommendation. A final report is prepared and is distributed to the Department Head, incumbent(s), union representatives for represented positions, and the members of the respective Commissions and the Finance and Personnel Committee.

Following distribution of the final report, the City Service Commission Rules provide interested parties with ten days to file a written appeal if there is disagreement with the recommendation. If an appeal is received, it is scheduled for a hearing at a later date. The Fire and Police Commission Rules allow an individual to speak at the meeting in which the report is being heard and may send the report back to the Department of Employee Relations for further study if there are some unresolved issues.

If the report is approved by the appropriate Commission, it is then forwarded to the Finance and

Personnel Committee for its consideration. If the report is approved by the Finance and Personnel Committee, it goes to the full Common Council and then the Mayor. If ultimately approved, the transactions become effective upon the first pay period following passage and publication which is usually twelve business days after approval by the Common Council.

In conclusion, our studies regarding reclassifications, reallocations and title changes are intended to assist in the goal of providing an internally equitable and externally competitive pay structure that effectively attracts, retains, and motivates employees.

Any questions or comments?

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| Call: | Andrea Knickerbocker, Human Resources Manager    | 286-3387 |
|       | Sarah Trotter, Human Resources Representative    | 286-2398 |
|       | Laura Sutherland, Human Resources Representative | 286-3368 |