

MEMORANDUM

State of Alaska
Department of Administration
Division of Personnel & Labor Relations

To: Dianne Kiesel
Director

Date: May 7, 2007

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Subject: Administrative Management Study

Introduction:

The Division of Personnel & Labor Relations proposed a classification study of the Administrative Assistant, Administrative Manager I-IV, and Administrative Services Manager I-II in October 2006. The proposal was in response to ongoing problems in applying the existing class specifications; changes in agencies' structure, operations, and complexities; and a significant volume of agency requests for reclassification of positions in the classes. The study was begun after discussion of priorities, issues, and planning with the Administrative Services Directors. At their request, we added the Secretary job class to the study.

Study Method:

For this study the Classification Section developed and piloted a Prospective Study Approach.

This approach includes:

- using Position Descriptions submitted within the last two years instead of requiring new ones at the beginning of the study;
- gathering additional information through interviews and a panel discussion with agency study contacts;
- developing and implementing new job classes/series that reflect current business needs and practices; and
- providing agencies a 12-month "migration" period for allocating positions into the new classes, rather than requiring that all study positions be processed with a single effective date.

This Prospective Study Approach was developed to reduce study processing time and provide agencies flexibility in managing the workflow and workforce issues associated with large, cross-agency studies. Specific benefits intended in this approach are:

- the timeline between the beginning of the study and implementation of new or revised job classes is considerably shortened;
- agencies can strategically manage their workload and minimize impact of the study on daily operations and workforce; and
- the work required of agencies at the beginning of the study is significantly reduced.

Study Scope:

This study covers the 436 positions in the Secretary, Administrative Assistant, Administrative Manager I-IV, and Administrative Services Manager I-II job classes. The Secretary positions were examined to determine what, if any, of their general administrative duties should be included in the general administrative classes.

History of Job Classes:

The Administrative Assistant (P1906) job class and Administrative Manager I-IV series (P1907 to P1910) were established January 1, 1996. They replaced the Administrative Assistant I-III series and Administrative Officer I-III series, which had existed since the early 1960s.

Administrative Services Manager (P1933) was established July 16, 1996. The class combined and replaced the Deputy Director, Administrative Services and Assistant Director, Administrative Services job classes. The Deputy Director, Administrative Services job class had been established on February 1, 1980. The class combined and replaced the Deputy Director, Fish and Game Administration; Deputy Director, Revenue Administrative Services; and Deputy Director, Highway Administration job classes. The history of the Assistant Director, Administrative Services is not available.

Administrative Services Manager I (P1931) was established on May 16, 2004. The class's creation resulted in the Administrative Services Manager (P1933) being re-titled to Administrative Services Manager II.

Class Analysis:

The principal characteristic of the work examined in this study is the responsibility for performing, coordinating, or managing the administrative support activities that enable the State's employees to provide the services and functions of government. These administrative support activities range from working with senior executives to plan, budget, monitor, and evaluate operations; to ensuring professional staff have the equipment and supplies they require where and when needed; and to ensuring basic office equipment is operating correctly, janitorial services are adequately provided, and records are properly maintained. The work of these positions includes responsibilities in multiple administrative specialties.

Incumbents in these positions work under a dual hierarchy. They are typically in administrative support units under the direction of a senior executive or program manager. Depending on the agency's preference, incumbents may be dispersed throughout agency subdivisions or be concentrated into a single support unit. Either way, support units often include both the generalist positions examined in this study and specialized, single-focus administrative positions.

The positions in this study frequently have responsibility for leading or supervising the work of lower-level staff, and providing technical guidance and direction to staff not in their supervisory chain.

Whether an agency's administrative support is concentrated or dispersed, incumbents have a secondary hierarchy of regulatory control that runs from the smallest unit through a division level to a department level and out to the divisions that serve as the State's central administrative authorities, such as the Division of General Services, Division of Finance, Division of Personnel & Labor Relations, etc.

The State's classification plan provides for grouping positions into job classes when they are sufficiently similar with respect to duties and responsibilities, degree of supervision exercised and received, and entrance requirements so that: 1) the same title can be used to clearly identify each position; 2) the same minimum qualifications for initial appointment can be established for all positions; 3) the same rate of basic pay can be fairly applied to all positions; and 4) employees in a particular class are considered an appropriate group for purposes of layoff and recall. Job classes should be constructed as broadly as is feasible as long as the tests of similarity are met.

After the job analysis, our first sorting identified three types of work performed by incumbents in the positions. The first type is paraprofessional in which incumbents, in an assistive role, perform duties requiring assessment and evaluation to provide guidance on applying administrative requirements to varying situations, recommend changes to office procedures to adopt management decisions and policies, and identify problems in administrative workflow and evaluate and recommend alternative administrative processes. The work requires knowledge of administrative methods and practices. Incumbents have authority to independently perform work that requires skill, care, and precision and is covered by established precedents or guidelines.

The second type is administrative/professional in which incumbents perform duties that require analytical ability, judgment, discretion, and personal responsibility for the application of a substantial body of knowledge of the principles, concepts, and practices of administrative support. Incumbents are primarily concerned with providing, securing, or negotiating for the resources or services needed for the operations of the organization served.

The third type is managerial in which incumbents' primary duty is managing the administrative support functions for a department or a major subdivision. The management duties require orchestrating the effective and efficient accomplishment of critical activities through others' performance and supervising employees who perform work in the activities managed. Incumbents are assigned authority for planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling activities and resources.

Because of the differences in the required knowledge and skills, different job classes and class series are created for different types of work in the State's classification system. Using the identified types as our foundation, we examined the work within each type to determine if creating a multiple-level class series was justified. This analysis focused on the levels of difficulty in the work, the nature of the supervision and guidance received, the level of independent authority assigned, and influences of the organization on the duties. To determine

what levels were warranted, we sorted for the greatest internal similarity in sets and greatest external variance between sets.

The paraprofessional work had previously been grouped into a single job class. One of the areas we were asked to examine was the possibility of creating more levels to provide a smoother progression for employees coming from advanced clerical work to the higher-level paraprofessional work. Our examination found a difference did exist that would address this issue. There is sufficient variance in the scope of duties assigned positions to sort them into two separate levels. The first level is characterized by performing work that requires care and precision, is clearly covered by existing guidelines, and occurs in regular, predictable cycles. The second level is characterized by performing work that regularly requires coordinating multiple, variable processes and frequently dealing with issues when established guidelines are not conclusive.

During this study we received several requests to allow for flexible staffing in the classes we develop. Flexible staffing is a position-specific option to aid in employee recruitment, training, and development. While developing classes, we considered the usefulness and limitations of flexing administrative positions. To provide agencies the greatest opportunity for training and developing employees, we crafted the paraprofessional series to allow for flexibly staffed positions when an agency has sufficient work at the higher level to support the allocation. However, we noted that because the levels within the professional and managerial series are delineated based on the relative complexity of work performed, and complexity is generally driven by the type of organizational characteristics present, normally an organization would not have administrative work that meets the definition of multiple levels within these higher series.

For instance, Administrative Officers I:

“perform professional-level administrative work that regularly requires resolving problems for which issues and solutions are clear and occasionally requires modifying established procedures to address specific issues. At this level, the organizational characteristics do not significantly impact the difficulty of administrative support work,”

whereas Administrative Officers II:

“perform professional-level administrative work that regularly requires resolving problems for which issues involve multiple variables, selecting the best solution requires evaluating conflicting needs, and established guidelines do not readily apply. At this level the organizational characteristics significantly impact the difficulty of administrative support work.”

Therefore, flexible staffing in the higher two series is not appropriate.

Previously the administrative/professional classes had been grouped into a four-level series that included the lower-level management duties. The levels within the series were distinguished principally by the quantifiable characteristics of the organization served. The history of the classes indicates this structure led to a lack of clarity in distinguishing between levels as government grew. It also increased confusion over the difference between supervision and management. Supervisory responsibilities are common throughout all levels of positions in this study and do not provide a sound basis for distinguishing classes. In structuring these classes, we have clarified what management is and created a separate series for it.

In our examination of the work in the administrative/professional group, we found we could clearly distinguish two levels with a boundary that could be reliably used in allocating positions. Any increase in the number of levels resulted in boundaries that could not be adequately delineated. The levels we created are distinguished by the complexity of regularly assigned work, the level of authority exercised, and the influence of organizational characteristics on the administrative activities performed. The first level performs professional-level administrative work that regularly requires resolving problems where issues and solutions are clear, and occasionally requires modifying established procedures to address specific issues. At this level the organizational characteristics do not significantly impact the difficulty of work. The second level performs professional-level administrative work that regularly requires resolving problems where issues involve multiple variables, where selecting the best solution requires balancing conflicting needs, and where established guidelines are not conclusive. At this level the organizational characteristics significantly impact the difficulty of work.

Using the impact of organizational characteristics on the work as a distinguishing element is something we examined with particular care. During the study's draft review stages, several respondents requested that we specify concrete, easily quantifiable indicators for the levels. For example, we received several recommendations to set standards based on organization size, many with contradictory suggestions on what impact that element should have. We determined that an organization's size, in itself, is not an element that indicates the level of work being performed by an employee. While size is not a determinative factor, it may indicate complexities that could influence the allocation.

We considered numerous variable factors that may influence the complexity of a position's administrative work but were unable to identify any element whose metric could always serve as an accurate indicator of the position's proper allocation. The question, we determined, was not whether a specific factor was present, but how the factors that were present affected the difficulty of the administrative support work. Answering this question will require that analysts allocating positions conduct a thorough job analysis and use sound judgment in applying whole job classification principles. As long as analysts do not attempt to allocate positions in isolation, but evaluate the position, its relationships within the organization, and its relationships within the executive branch, inter-rater reliability should remain high. We have provided classification analysts with a list of examples of variable factors that they should consider when conducting a job analysis.

Previously the managerial work had been split between the higher-level professional series and a two-level series. The addition of the two higher classes at different times, to address different agency issues, resulted in a series that was not internally consistent. Our examination found that the tasks of positions whose primary duty was management were similar. The main distinguishing element was the organizational authority of the incumbent and the influence of the organization on the complexity of administrative functions. At the first level incumbents manage the administrative support functions for a major subdivision of a department. At this level the difficulty of administrative support work is moderately impacted by the organizational structure and scope of control. The term "major subdivision" was used to cover both departments that use divisions as the principal hierarchical structure and departments that use regions as their principal structure. The second level combines two types of positions that have similar

responsibilities and complexities: 1) the deputy director of administrative services for a department for which difficulty of administrative support work is moderately impacted by the organizational structure and scope of control; and 2) the manager of administrative support functions for a major departmental subdivision for which the difficulty of support work is significantly impacted by the organizational structure and scope of control. The third level is for managers who function as the deputy director of administrative services in a department for which difficulty of administrative support work is substantially impacted by the organizational scope of control.

In this series, as in the professional level series, the organization served will be a major consideration in allocating positions, in so far as it affects the difficulty of the administrative support activities. We tried to clearly describe the type and level of authority and complexity appropriate for a position to be placed in each level, and to clarify that being the top-level administrative position in a division was not, in itself, to be considered a determinative factor for allocation.

Class Title:

A class title should be the best descriptive title for the work. It is intended to concisely and accurately convey the kind and level of work performed and should be brief, easily recognized, gender neutral, and understood by potential applicants.

In the Prospective Study Approach, the old classes shall coexist with the new classes until all positions in the old classes have been reallocated. In order to minimize the possibility of confusion during this period, the new classes have been assigned titles that differ from the old classes. After considerable review of recommendations and options, we selected Administrative Assistant I-II, Administrative Officer I-II, and Administrative Operations Manager I-III. The Administrative Assistant's Roman numeral level indicator will help distinguish it from the single-level class. The Administrative Officer has not been used since 1996, so the likelihood of confusion is minimal. Administrative Operations Manager is a title that has not previously been used in the executive branch.

Minimum Qualifications:

The minimum qualifications established for a job class must relate to the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the work and must not create an artificial barrier to employment of individuals in protected classes. Required training should be limited to the basic formal training that customarily prepares individuals for work in the field. Experience requirements are intended to ensure new incumbents can successfully perform the work after a period of orientation or familiarization. Required experience should be directly related to the actual duties of positions in the class and should not be equivalent to the work to be performed.

Since incumbents in these class series are generalists providing a wide range of administrative support, there is a wide variety of backgrounds from which capable applicants may be drawn. The principal method of advancing in the occupation is through experience. This progression in experience was the main criterion used in establishing the minimum qualifications of each job class. To provide the broadest pool of applicants who can be reasonably expected to succeed in the positions, the qualifying experience is limited to administrative functions, but can be acquired in any organization or business. In recognition of the knowledge and skills acquired

through post-secondary education, we included eligibility for candidates to enter the lower-level classes from this avenue. At the higher levels the qualification has been limited to directly related experience at a lower level since our job analysis showed advance education was not a standard prerequisite for the work or an indicator of an applicant's potential for success.

Class Code:

A Class Code is assigned based on the placement of the job class in the classification schematic of Occupational Groups and Job Families. Occupational Groups are made up of related Job Families and encompass relatively broad occupations, professions, or activities. Job Families are groups of job classes and class series that are related as to the nature of the work performed and typically have similar initial preparation for employment and career progression.

The focus of the new job classes on administrative support indicates the classes should be included in the Administrative and Office Support occupational group (PB). This group includes families of classes that advise on, administer, supervise or perform work involved in administration; management; accounting and related financial management; research and statistics; supply; personnel management; information technology; and clerical and secretarial work.

The nature of the general administrative responsibilities, which requires performing work in multiple administrative support functions, indicates the classes should be placed in the General Administration job family (PB01). This family includes classes of positions that perform administrative, technical, and clerical work of a general nature that enables agencies to perform their line functions. Initial preparation for employment is typically through general education or office experience with subsequent career progression based on progressively responsible experience.

Because the old and new classes shall coexist for a period, the Class Codes assigned the old classes may not be used for the new classes. The new classes are assigned the following codes: Administrative Assistant I – PB0151; Administrative Assistant II – PB0152; Administrative Officer I – PB0154; Administrative Officer II – PB0155; Administrative Operations Manager I – PB0157; Administrative Operations Manager II – PB0158; and Administrative Operations Manager III – PB0159.

AKPAY Code:

Since the old classes will not be abolished concurrent with the establishment of the new classes, new AKPAY codes are required. The new classes are assigned AKPAY codes K0017 through K0023, inclusive.

Fair Labor Standards Act

Incumbents in the positions in this study are covered by the minimum wage and maximum hour provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as Amended (FLSA). While exemption from the provisions of the Act are determined based on the specific circumstances of an individual employee on a work-week basis, there are general aspects of the classes and their influence on the Section 13(a)(1) exemptions for employees in bona fide executive, professional, or administrative positions that can be addressed in general.

The U. S. Department of Labor's regulations (29 CFR Part 541) define and delimit the Section 13(a)(1) exemptions for executive, administrative, and professional employees. Each subpart includes criteria for an employee's salary and primary duty to meet the exemption.

Under State pay rules, an employee may not be paid less than the base wage rate established for a job class. The base wage rate for these classes is above the \$455 per week required by the regulations. When paid on a salary basis, full-time employees in these classes will meet the salary criteria for exemption.

Exemption as a professional employee requires the employee's primary duty be performing work that requires knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction. This test includes three elements: 1) the employee must perform work requiring advanced knowledge; 2) the advanced knowledge must be in a field of science or learning; and 3) the advanced knowledge must be customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction. The primary duty of incumbents in these classes is performing a mixture of general administrative tasks. While the work requires knowledge of administrative processes, a specialized academic degree is not a standard prerequisite. The lack of requirement for a degree in a field of science or learning precludes incumbents in these classes from meeting the criteria for exemption as professional employees.

Exemption as an administrative employee requires the employee's primary duty be performing office or non-manual work directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer or the employer's customers, which includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance. "Directly related to the management or general business operations" refers to work related to assisting with the running or servicing of the business, and includes work in such functional areas as finance, accounting, budgeting, purchasing, procurement, personnel management, public relations, legal and regulatory compliance, and similar activities. Discretion and independent judgment involves the comparison and evaluation of possible courses of conduct, and acting or making a decision after the various possibilities have been considered. "Matters of significance" refers to the level of importance or consequence of the work performed.

The characteristics that would cause a position to be allocated to one of the new classes would also indicate an incumbent's primary duty was performance of the type of work required for exemption as an administrative employee. The scope and level of duties and authority assigned positions properly allocated to the Administrative Assistant I, Administrative Assistant II, and Administrative Officer I classes indicate incumbents in these positions typically would not exercise the level of discretion and independent judgment in matters of significance required to meet the exemption criteria. Incumbents in positions properly allocated to the Administrative Officer II class and Administrative Operations Manager I-III series normally would exercise the level of discretion and independent judgment in matters of significance required to meet the criteria for exemption as administrative employees.

Exemption as an executive employee requires the employee's primary duty be managing the customarily recognized department or subdivision in which the employee is employed. This work must include regularly directing the work of two or more other employees and the authority

to hire or fire other employees, or recommend with particular weight the hiring, firing, advancement, promotion, or other change of status of other employees.

The organizational structures in the State's Executive Branch commonly place incumbents in these classes over other employees in an administrative unit. The duties frequently include supervision of employees in the unit and may include authority to hire and effectively recommend advancement, promotion, or other change of status of subordinates. However, the primary duty of incumbents in the Administrative Assistant and Administrative Officer series would not typically be management of the unit. For positions in these classes, the primary duty is normally performance of administrative activities, and any management duties are performed as a secondary assignment. This primary duty would preclude incumbents in these classes from meeting the criteria for exemption as executives. Incumbents in the Administrative Operations Manager series would normally have management as their primary duty and typically manage a recognized subdivision with an ongoing function and permanent status. When such an employee directly supervises two or more full-time subordinates with authority to hire or effectively recommend discharge, grant or deny merit increases, or other changes in status, the criteria for exemption as an executive employee would be met.

Internal Alignment:

The salary range of a job class is determined based on internal consistency within the State's pay plans, in accordance with merit principles, with the goal of providing fair and reasonable compensation for services rendered and maintaining the principle of "like pay for like work." In evaluating internal consistency, the difficulty, responsibility, knowledge, skills, and other characteristics of a job are compared with job classes of a similar nature, kind, and level in the same occupational group and job family or related job families.

To conduct the pay analysis for the new job classes, we made our comparisons first in the General Administrative job group (PB). We then evaluated specific elements of the classes against job families outside the General Administrative group to ensure the classes were given a full evaluation. The classes used for comparison were from the following job families:

- PB02 Accounting and Fiscal
- PB03 Personnel and Employee Relations
- PB05 Statistics and Research Analysis
- PB06 Supply
- PB99 Administrative classes not otherwise described
- PC01 Business Finance
- PD01 Government Management and Operations
- PD09 Property Management
- PE06 Arts, Photography, and Information

The comparison of the Administrative Assistant classes' defining characteristics; the type and level of knowledge and skills required; nature of guidelines used; and independent authority exercised found the majority of similarities were with classes assigned ranges 12 and 14. We examined the generalists' "jack-of-all-trades" characteristics against the specialists' "master-of-one" and determined the Administrative Assistant classes should not be aligned at higher ranges based on the different balance between scope and depth.

Consideration of the progression a typical employee would experience in advancing through the clerical-level classes into these paraprofessional classes supported assigning ranges that continue the two-range interval pattern.

Based on the preponderance of internal comparisons and the logical career progression from clerical classes, we recommend the Administrative Assistant I and II be placed at salary ranges 12 and 14, respectively.

The comparison of the Administrative Officer classes' defining characteristics; the type and level of knowledge and skills required; the scope and level of independent judgment and discretion exercised; nature and scope of organizational control exercised; and the nature of controls over the work performed found the majority of similarities for the first level evenly split between classes at ranges 16 and 17. The second level's similarities are with classes at ranges 18 and 19, with most of the closest comparisons at range 19. These comparisons indicate ranges 17 and 19 would be the most appropriate.

Assigning these ranges would result in a three-range interval between the higher-level paraprofessional and the first-level professional class. Careful analysis of the different sets of knowledge, skills and abilities required supports this separation. Experience also indicates a two-range increment does not adequately compensate employees for the increased responsibility expected of professional positions.

Based on the preponderance of internal comparisons and the increased expectations of professional level employees, we recommend the Administrative Officer I and II be placed at salary ranges 17 and 19, respectively.

The comparison of the Administrative Operations Manager classes' defining characteristics; scope and level of managerial responsibility; the type and level of knowledge and skills required; the nature and scope of organizational control exercised; and the placement and role in the organization's hierarchy and the State's administrative hierarchy found the majority of similarities with classes at ranges 20, 22, and 23. These salary ranges reflect the "ceiling" against which ranges had compressed over several years. The recent change to the Division Director's salary range has moved this barrier. Aligning these job classes with classes at ranges 20, 22, and 23, which were set under the previous limitations, would only continue the problems the change was intended to alleviate.

Our analysis indicated a greater difference in salary is appropriate than would be attained by a two-range interval from the professional levels. The similarity in duties found in the Administrative Operations Managers, and the limited amount of difference in complexities and authority in each level indicate a minimal difference in the ranges between levels is appropriate.

Based on the level and scope of managerial authority assigned; the amount of difference from the higher level professional class; and the amount of difference between the managerial levels, we recommend the Administrative Operations Manager I, II, and III be placed at salary ranges 22, 23, and 24, respectively.

Conclusions:

This study's goals were to develop class specifications that clearly define the levels of work and take into consideration the changes in agencies' structure, operations, and complexities.

We established a two-level paraprofessional series at ranges 12 and 14; a two-level administrative/professional series at ranges 17 and 19; and a three-level managerial series at ranges 22, 23, and 24. The new classes are effective May 7, 2007. The old administrative classes shall be abolished when the positions have migrated into the new classes, no later than a year from now (May 7, 2008).

Attachments:

Final class specifications

cc: Administrative Services Directors

Administrative Management Agency Study Contacts

Management Services

Technical Services

Employee Services