

# MEMORANDUM

**State of Alaska**  
**Department of Administration**  
**Division of Personnel**

**To:** Dianne Kiesel  
Director

**Date:** May 5, 2006

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**Subject:** State Travel Office Class Study

## **Preamble:**

The Division of Finance (DOF) submitted a request to the Division of Personnel to establish a new State Travel Office Assistant job class, to assume a portion of the upcoming workload generated by all State agencies converting to use of the State Travel Office's travel services. The Division of Personnel commenced work on this project in February 2006.

In 2004 the Office of the Governor directed the Department of Administration to establish a State Travel Office (STO) to manage travel for the executive branch. A travel service contract was let, and in September 2004 the Division of Personnel established the single-position State Travel Manager job class to direct and oversee contracted travel services for State agencies. Initially only a few select departments or programs within departments were identified to pilot the new system, but the State Travel Manager was tasked with selling the concept of managed travel services to the remaining State agencies, and the Commissioner of the Department of Administration has since then set the requirement that effective July 1, 2006, all agencies will convert. Because of the predicted swell in the volume of travel requests the STO will be handling, the DOF requested help in the form of an assistant for the State Travel Manager.

The State Travel Office Assistant role has been designed to take over from the Manager principally the liaison responsibilities between the STO and State personnel, and a variety of data research, analysis and reporting functions that are vital to the continued refinement and improvement of the STO's service provision. This frees the Manager to concentrate more exclusively on management and direction of the STO, policy and training development, and development and maintenance of business relationships with travel vendors.

## **Study Scope:**

This study included the review of the current State Travel Manager position and the body of work proposed for the new Assistant role. Portions of the lower level work originally assigned to the State Travel Manager are being reassigned to the Assistant, along with additional duties, the necessity for which has become apparent during the STO's initial few months of operation.

**Study Method:**

In February and early March, the DOF submitted several sequential versions of a draft position description for the State Travel Office Assistant, followed by draft job class specifications for their proposed position. In mid-March the analyst met with DOF representatives to discuss the two STO roles and what the DOF saw as the boundaries separating those roles. Class specifications for both the State Travel Manager and the State Travel Office Assistant were developed with the input of the DOF, an internal alignment analysis was conducted for the new Assistant job class, position descriptions for both the Manager and the Assistant were revised to match the newly divided body of work within the STO, the positions were allocated, and study results are being implemented effective May 5, 2006. The DOF anticipates immediately recruiting to fill the new State Travel Office Assistant, so as to make a hire and allow for a brief period of orientation and training prior to all State agencies' conversion to using the contracted travel services of the STO.

Due to both the very limited scope of this study and the short timeframe within which DOF hoped the Division of Personnel would be able to complete the project, the standardized class study process was abbreviated and only the most essential elements were retained. The class studies team exercises this flexibility in applying our processes, depending on the unique needs and circumstances surround each study request.

**History of Job Class:**

The State Travel Manager job class was established nineteen months ago at the directive of the Office of the Governor. The State Travel Office Assistant is a new, single-position job class being created in response to the DOF's realization that management of the STO, as all departments begin using the STO's services, will be a larger responsibility and workload than it was first envisioned to be.

**Class Analysis:**

The State Travel Manager was created to plan, direct and lead the operations of the new STO, and to oversee and manage contracted travel service provision to all State agencies. Prospectively this class was tasked with a fairly wide range of duties and functions, but once the incumbent had been performing in the position for a year, it became clear that the roster of duties exceeded the capacity of one individual. This study bifurcates the original State Travel Manager and clarifies its role as a policy level position tasked with the overall management of the enterprise-wide service provision by the contracted STO staff, and it establishes the State Travel Office Assistant as a right-hand assistant to handle the elements of the workload involving somewhat less originality and initiative, aspects that require a lower level of authority and involve a lower level of responsibility. The State Travel Office Assistant's role has been defined as just that, assistive, supporting the Manager's overarching ability to run the STO.

As a result of the study, the State Travel Manager:

- Oversees contracted service provision for the STO
- Participates in the procurement process for travel vendors
- Develops and maintains business relationships with travel vendors
- Resolves contractor compliance, customer service and service quality issues

- Routinely reviews compilations of data on travel service utilization, contractor performance, client complaints and suggestions, and client compliance with the mandatory STO-usage policy
- Provides strategic planning and policy development for the STO
- Engages in outreach to sell the mission of the STO to all agencies
- Identifies training needs for both STO clients and STO contracted staff; develops and conducts training
- Supervises State STO staff

The new State Travel Office Assistant:

- Serves as the liaison between State personnel and lead contracted STO staff
- Develops data gathering tools related to STO service, and researches, analyzes and reports on such data
- Updates and maintains State traveler profile information, oversees upload of profile changes, audits profiles and works with contractor to correct data errors
- Assists in evaluating current STO processes and recommending improvements
- Solicits agencies' recommendations for STO improvement, formulates system change requests for the contractor, and tests and implements system enhancements
- Assists in drafting STO policies and procedures, communicates STO policies and procedures to State personnel, and monitors and enforces compliance
- Assists in conducts training on use of the STO for State personnel
- Edits and publishes a STO newsletter
- Acts for the State Travel Manager when necessary

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.

“State Travel Office Assistant” is an accurate and appropriate descriptor of this new body of work, and “State Travel Manager” remains appropriate for the STO’s lead role.

Minimum Qualifications:

The minimum qualifications (MQs) 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 employees 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.

In the case of both the State Travel Manager and the State Travel Office Assistant, work experience involving regular use of a computerized travel scheduling system was deemed to be the most important preparation applicants should have; justification for *requiring* any particular education level was not found, although DOF representatives felt a bachelor’s degree could

reasonable substitute for a portion of that prior work experience. Since the State Travel Manager ultimately holds responsibility for the STO's successful operations, the years of required work experience at the Manager level were set slightly higher.

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 State Travel Manager class has been in the Supply family (P13XX) of the Clerical, Fiscal and Administrative occupational group. This family includes classes of positions that advise on, administer, supervise, or perform work concerned with furnishing all types of supplies, equipment and materials for the conducting of State business. The basis for placing this class in the Supply family is not in the available records but appears to have been a "best available option."

The Classification Outline is being revised. In the new schematic, the two study classes are placed in the "administrative classes not otherwise described" job family, along with a few others that did not strongly fit the common characteristics of any of the other specific administrative job families.

The State Travel Manager remains assigned to the current P1350 class code, and will be assigned to the PB9903 new class code. The State Travel Office Assistant will be assigned to P1351 under the old Classification Outline and PB9906 under the new Classification Outline.

Fair Labor Standards Act

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 exemptions for employees in bona fide executive, professional, or administrative positions that can be addressed in general.

Both study positions are expected to act with independence in managing the development of the enterprise-wide services of the contracted STO, and based on the defining characteristics of the two classes, both would meet the administrative criteria for exemption from the Fair Labor Standards Act.

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.

Since the State Travel Manager class was so recently established, and the scope and nature of the position's class controlling elements did not significantly change as a result of our establishing the Assistant role, re-review of the salary range assigned to the Manager was unnecessary.

Under both the current and the proposed revised Classification Outline, the State Travel Office Assistant job class falls within the Administrative occupational group, but in order to ensure full compensatory consideration, classes outside this group that share common characteristics with the study class were also selected for comparative analysis with the State Travel Office Assistant.

If one were to highly simplify the role of the Assistant, the class's functions are chiefly divided into data manipulation, research, analysis and reporting; and serving as liaison and trainer for the STO. Comparison classes tended to align with one functional area or the other but not both.

The State Travel Office Assistant was first compared with Associate Coordinator (P4230, R18), Planner II (P2292, R17), Development Specialist I (P2286, R18), Research Analyst II (P1793, R16), Payroll Specialist I (P1244, R16) and II (P1245, R18), and Project Assistant (P4229, R16). These are all full working or advanced level professional job classes. With the exception of the Payroll Specialists, all require a bachelor's degree and 1-2 years' working experience at a lower level. The fact that the MQs for State Travel Office job classes have been established without requiring specific education is not so much a reflection on the nature or complexity of the work, but rather on a changing philosophy within Division of Personnel, an increased sensitivity to the potential for creating unwarranted barriers to employment for protected classes of applicants.

To a greater or lesser degree, the Associate Coordinator, Planner II, Development Specialist, Research Analyst II, Payroll Specialists, and Project Assistant and the State Travel Office Assistant share a common focus on research, analysis, problem identification, planning and resolution development. The Associate Coordinator also generally serves in an assistive capacity to a higher level manager, supporting the development, operations and improvement of a statewide program or function. Research Analysts' roles are narrower and more specialized than that of the State Travel Office Assistant, and Research Analysts' scope of responsibility and authority is likewise more limited. While the State Travel Office Assistant shares numerous characteristics with the scope and nature of the Payroll Specialists, albeit in a different functional area, a higher level of initiative and responsibility is required of Payroll Specialist II's. Additionally, the Payroll Specialist II may supervise a unit, whereas the State Travel Office Assistant does not. There is overlap in the nature and variety of the work of Project Assistants and the State Travel Office Assistant, but Project Assistants tend to operate under relatively close supervision and are assigned projects of a narrow scope, whereas the State Travel Office Assistant must function with a great deal of independent and supports the operations of an enterprise-wide function. Amalgamating these factors would point towards assignment of range 17 to the State Travel Office Assistant.

The State Travel Office Assistant was then compared with the educational outreach and/or liaison functions of the Associate Coordinator, Planner II, Development Specialist I, Payroll Specialists I and II, Project Assistant, as well as Information Officer I (P3613, R14) and II (P3614, R17), and Training Specialist I (P1471, R16) and II (P1472, R18). With the exception of Information Officer I, these are full working or advanced level professional job classes. In the cases of the Development Specialist, the Information Officers, and the Training Specialist I and II, as well as our State Travel Office Assistant, effective formal outreach to and/or education of clients constitutes a significant portion of assigned duties. In the other comparison classes, while that duty may be present, it plays a relatively minor role so there is less basis for comparison.

The nature and scope of these activities within the Development Specialist I class closely parallel such expectations of the State Travel Office Assistant and for both, outreach and education constitute a significant portion of assignments, but the level of responsibility and authority for program development and direction is greater for the Development Specialist, as are scope of decisions and commitments; because the State Travel Office Assistant works beneath the State Travel Manager, many responsibilities are in fact shared, even in cases when the State Travel Office Assistant may be the one principally expected to conduct certain activities for the STO.

The Informational Officers overlap the State Travel Office Assistant's duties relatively narrowly but neatly in that area. The lower level Informational Officer is defined as working in subject areas where little negative reaction is anticipated, and where programs have minimal impact, whereas the second level is defined as working in areas requiring active efforts to minimize public conflict and dissent, and for programs that may be subject to considerable modification based on public reaction or are subject to misunderstanding, misconception or conflicting views. The sensitivity surrounding the State Travel Office's initial conversion to mandatory usage by all departments may temporarily elevate, but it is likely that in the longer run, in general the State Travel Office Assistant's role as liaison to and trainer of State personnel will not remain high-profile. Similarly the activities of the State Travel Office Assistant fall somewhere in between the levels of complexity, initiative and originality required, and impact of decisions of the Training Specialist I and II.

Based on this second major functional area for the State Travel Office Assistant, again assignment of range 17 seems most reasonable and appropriate.

Lastly, a comparison was made between the State Travel Manager (P1350, R20) and the State Travel Office Assistant. While it is true that the two positions share a common work environment and the common goal of developing and improving the STO, the Manager's role involves a great degree of vision, strategic planning and responsibility, and the Assistant's role is more technically oriented, requiring hands-on expertise with the relevant travel data bases and computer systems. Where there is overlap in a functional area, the Manager takes the lead and the Assistant provides supportive actions, input, data, etc. The scope of the decisions and commitments and the consequence for serious error for the Assistant is only moderate, except in those relatively rare instances when the Manager is absent and the Assistant is called to act in his/her stead.

Typically there exists a two-range gap between a supervisor and their highest range employees, but in this case, considering all factors and other comparable classes, a three-range differential is supported. The recommended range assignment for the new State Travel Office Assistant is R17.

**Position Allocation:**

PCN 024092 is located in Juneau and is supervised by PCN 024075. PCN 024095 is likewise located in Juneau, and is supervised by PCN 024092. For these two single-position job classes, job class concepts and the distinctions between the two classes have been under discussion as both the class specifications were edited/created, and as the position descriptions were tailored. This is unlike the more common situation of assessing a static position description against numerous possible matches among existing State job classes. In this case, the one-to-one association of the position description and the new or revised job class spec was the goal of the study.

**Conclusions:**

PCN 024092 remains the position defined as the State Travel Manager. Due to creation of the subordinate role, the position is recommended for transfer to the Supervisory bargaining unit, and the position meets the administrative criteria for exemption from the Fair Labor Standards Act.

PCN 024095 becomes the position defined as the new State Travel Office Assistant. This position is appropriately placed in the General Governing Unit, and meets the administrative criteria for exemption from the Fair Labor Standards Act.

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