

HR SOLUTIONS

CLASSIFICATION DEMYSTIFIED

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Any one who works in the area of Human Resources will tell you that the most common questions and misunderstandings in the personnel world surround the area of position classification. To most managers and supervisors it seems at best an arcane science and at worst an irritating obstacle to meeting their business objectives. Employees search for the perfect word combination to put in a Position Description that will trigger a higher pay range. Classification studies result in rampant rumors, and general fear and trepidation. In short, classification has a bad reputation because most people don't understand how the process works and they don't understand the critical role it plays in human resources.

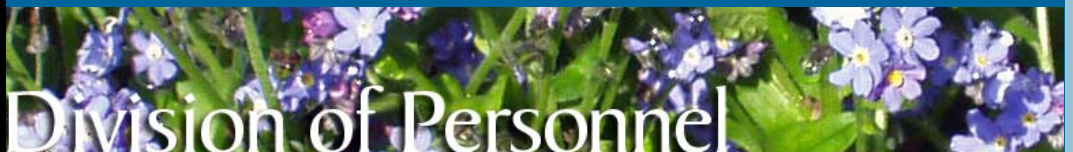
Classification is the cornerstone of the State's Personnel system. The concept of classification is quite simple: the work assigned a position is described and the classifier places the position into the job class that best fits the kind and level of work assigned. This is done in order to assure that managers and supervisors can recruit and select applicants who have the proper qualifications to do the work, that employees have clear career

ladders and promotional opportunities, and that pay is equitable.

Proper classification is also the foundation of the performance management cycle. In order to recruit an employee, communicate standards and expectations, evaluate, and compensate them appropriately, you have to be able to describe the work. It is also an important element in ensuring equitable treatment of all employees which in turn helps to limit the State's liability when an employment relationship turns sour.

The goal of this edition of HR Solutions is to take some of the mystery out of position classification and help managers and supervisors understand more about the process. Inside, we provide a bird's eye view of the classification plan, details on what a human resource professional considers when allocating a position to a job class, and some insight into the classification study process. In addition, there is also an article that provides insight into the area of Nepotism and employment with the State.

HR



DIVISION OF PERSONNEL VISION STATEMENT

The Division of Personnel is a unified staff who coordinates strengths and talents to deliver client focused human resource services. We provide innovative program development, consultation, and direct service delivery.

HR...passionate about your success.

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A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

The foundation of the State of Alaska Personnel System is articulated in Article XII, Section 6 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska. The constitution requires that "The legislature establish a system under which the merit principle will govern the employment of persons by the State."

The State Personnel Act (AS 39.25) outlines the merit principles of State employment and places authority for administering the State Personnel Act with the director of personnel. By statute, the merit principle of employment includes the following:

- (1) recruiting, selecting, and advancing employees on the basis of their relative ability, knowledge, and skills, including open consideration of qualified applicants for initial appointment;
- (2) regular integrated salary programs based on the nature of the work performed;
- (3) retention of employees with permanent status on the basis of the adequacy of their performance, reasonable efforts of temporary duration for correction in inadequate performance, and separation for cause;
- (4) equal treatment of applicants and employees



with regard only to consideration within the merit principles of employment; and

- (5) selection and retention of an employee's position secure from political influences.

The Classification Section is responsible for ensuring that the State's classification and pay plans meet the requirements of the merit principle as set forth in the Personnel Act (AS 39.25). In brief this means that our classification system is founded on grouping positions based on duties and responsibilities, and that we have an integrated pay plan based on the principle of "like pay for like work (AS 39.25.150)." Under the broad authority granted to the Director, the Division of Personnel directs, audits, performs, participates in or contracts for all classification and compensation decisions for positions in the classified and partially exempt services.

In short, the Division of Personnel is responsible for assuring that all positions in the classified and partially exempt service are placed in an integrated structure of job classifications that assure, to the best of our ability, the concept of "like pay for like work" or internal alignment. This creates the "grid" from which employees are paid. The actual dollar value of that grid is determined through collective bargaining and legislative action.

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The Classification Section is responsible for ensuring that the State's classification and pay plans meet the requirements of the merit principle as set forth in the Personnel Act (AS 39.25).

HOW IS THE CLASSIFICATION SECTION STRUCTURED?

Currently, there are approximately 23 staff assigned to the Classification Section in the Division of Personnel. Staff are assigned to work teams based on the type of work performed and the client agencies served; the Gold Team, the Blue Team, and the Classification Studies team.

The Gold Team reviews individual position allocations submitted by the Departments of Transportation, Natural Resources, Environmental Conservation, Fish & Game, Corrections, Military and Veteran's Affairs, and Public Safety.



The Blue Team reviews individual position allocations submitted by the Departments of Health & Social Services, Administration, Law, Revenue, Education and Early Development, Labor and Workforce Development, and Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

The Classification Study Team reviews maintenance requests submitted by all departments, completes classification studies affecting one or more job classifications, creates and maintains job class specifications, establishes minimum qualifications and assigns pay ranges to job classes.

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CLASSIFICATION STATISTICS FOR FY 05

In Fiscal Year 2005, the Classification Section of the Division of Personnel accomplished the following work:

- Completed 28 Classification Studies impacting 58 job classifications and 198 individual positions.
- Updated 65 job classifications through the Maintenance Request process.
- Reviewed and allocated 1,711 positions.
- Created and allocated 808 non permanent positions.

Division of Personnel Client Service Standards for Classification

The Division of Personnel has client service standards in place for key human resource processes. The standards are mostly expressed in terms of turn around times, although other standards are also measured. For classification, the division of personnel measures and reports on the following areas:

Core Service	Standard	FY 05 Standards*
PDs logged in for processing	Same day if possible, no later than 1 business day.	avg 1 day
Actions logged into PD Tracker	Same business day as processed.	
Create Non-permanent positions	Within 2 business days.	avg 1 day
Priority PDs & PDs for recruitment	Within 14 calendar days.	avg 20+ days
Reclassification actions involving a proposed change to the class	Within 35 calendar days.	avg 35 days
Classification actions involving a proposed update	Within 58 calendar days	avg 29+ days
Maintenance Requests on existing class specifications	Within 14 calendar days	avg 9 days
Classification Studies	At least one top priority study per operating agency per fiscal year	28 Class studies completed to date (58 classes, 198 PCNs), including 12 of 13 #1 priorities

*Note FY 05 Standard Statistics are based on a 9 month period.

For a complete review of Division of Personnel Client Service Measures, and to see how we measured up during FY05, visit the division of personnel home page at:

<http://dop.state.ak.us>

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WORKING WITH MANAGEMENT SERVICES ON CLASSIFICATION MATTERS

Is this the first time you've written a position description? Would you like to have it reviewed prior to submittal for level of detail and completeness? If so, contact your Management Services Consultant. Consultants are available to coach supervisors through the position description preparation process and to provide feedback regarding the proper and thorough completion of a position description. Please be aware though, that Management Services staff can not guarantee a specific out-

come.

Consultants are also available to provide guidance to managers and supervisors regarding the process for requesting a job classification study and maintenance to job class specifications. Uncertain what this means or if a study or maintenance is appropriate? Consultants are available to answer these questions as well.

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Management Services Consultants are available to coach supervisors through the position description preparation process and to provide feedback regarding the proper and thorough completion of a position description.

ELEMENTS OF THE CLASSIFICATION PLAN

Central to the application of the merit principle is the Executive Branch Classification Plan, which is comprised of two major elements: (1) individual position descriptions for every classified or partially exempt position and (2) the Classification Outline of job classes, series, families, and occupational groups used to sort, organize, and describe bodies of work.

Alaska's *merit principle* requires that the recruitment, selection, and advancement of public employees occur under conditions of political neutrality, equal opportunity, and competition on the basis of individual merit and competence.

Central to the application of the merit principle is the Executive Branch Classification Plan, which is comprised of two major elements: (1) individual position descriptions for every classified or partially exempt position and (2) the Classification Outline of job classes, series, families, and occupational groups used to sort, organize, and describe bodies of work. The current Classification Outline may be viewed at <http://dop.state.ak.us/fileadmin/Classification/pdf/ClassOutline.pdf>.

The Division of Personnel's Classification Section is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the Classification Plan—work that is broken down into the review and analysis of individual position descriptions submitted by departments, job class maintenance requests, and class studies. See related articles in this issue of HR Solutions.

A *position description* is a detailed accounting of a position's assigned duties, responsibilities, and level of authority. The document is submitted in a prescribed format and kept as a public record by the State. Each position is designated and tracked by a unique position control number (PCN).

A *job class* is a group of one or more positions that are sufficiently similar in duties and responsibilities, degree of supervision exercised and received, and entrance requirements so that:

- the same title can be used to clearly identify the main purpose of each position.
- the same minimum qualifications for initial appointment can be established for all positions.
- the same rate of basic pay can be fairly applied to all positions.
- employees in a particular job class can be considered an appropriate group for purposes

of layoff and recall.

As long as these tests of similarity are met, the Division of Personnel constructs job classes as broadly as feasible. Approximately 1,400 current State job classes are listed alphabetically and described in detail in the Job Class Specifications area of the online Workplace Alaska recruitment system: <http://workplace.alaska.gov>. Each job class is assigned a unique four-digit class code, which is visible in Workplace Alaska job class specifications in the upper right-hand corner.

A *class series* is constructed of two or more job classes sharing a common title but distinguished on the basis of classification factors such as the variety and complexity of work, the nature of supervision received, and the qualifications required for an individual to perform the work adequately.

A *job family* is a group of job classes and class series related by the nature of the work performed. The initial preparation for employment and subsequent career progression are typically similar for all job classes in a family. Job classes within a job family share the first two digits of the four-digit class code (e.g., General Administrative – 19XX).

The State recognizes nine *occupational groups* of related job families—groups that encompass relatively broad occupations, professions, or activities. Occupational groupings are designated by the first digit of the job class code.



- 1xxx – Clerical, Fiscal, and Administrative
- 2xxx – Business, Industry, and Land Management
- 3xxx – Education, Information, Libraries, and Museums
- 4xxx – Social Services
- 5xxx – Medical, Public Health, and Related
- 6xxx – Biological Sciences
- 7xxx – Legal, Judicial, and Law Enforcement
- 8xxx – Engineering and Physical Sciences
- 9xxx – Labor, Trades, and Crafts

CLASSIFICATION FACTORS WHAT COUNTS

What does a classifier look for when determining what job class to place a position in?

In order to assign positions to a job class that best describes the primary and essential duties and responsibilities, comparisons are made between the position and job class specifications. The classifier looks at the factors described below to provide a basis for analyzing positions and for making these comparisons. These same factors are used when a new job classification series is established to distinguish between the levels in the series.

1. NATURE, VARIETY & COMPLEXITY:

"Nature" includes the kind of work performed as shown by such elements as the subject matter, profession or occupation involved.

"Variety" includes the range of duties and the inherently different kinds of work included in the position. It also reflects the range of kinds of work and skills which are included in the class. "Complexity" includes the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done, and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

To evaluate this factor, classifiers ask such questions as:

- What subject matter, profession, occupation or function is involved?
- What knowledge, skills, abilities and techniques are applied?
- Is the work varied?
- Are the various tasks in the same or related subject matter fields?
- Are the tasks of a recurring type or do they present non-repetitive or unique problems?
- Are assignments made to the position on the basis of difficulty?

2. NATURE OF SUPERVISION RECEIVED:

"Supervision received" refers to the nature and extent of deliberate, planned supervisory controls exercised over the incumbent of the position. It also looks at the independence with which the work is performed and the nature and finality of the decision made. Indications of supervisory controls also include the basis for selection of work assignments, the nature of direct instructions or

advice from a supervisor that the incumbent receives, and the extent and degree to which actions and decisions are limited by review of all cases, by spot checks, or review of the program for effectiveness or for conformity with policy.

To evaluate this factor, classifiers ask such questions as:

- From whom does the employee receive instructions?
- What type of instructions are they and are they general or detailed?
- Is the supervision provided technical or functional or is it of a general administrative nature?
- Is the work reviewed during process or upon completion?
- Is the work given a technical review (substantive, content) or it is reviewed only for compliance with administrative matters (signatory)?



3. NATURE OF AVAILABLE GUIDELINES:

This factor relates to the extent to which performance of the work is controlled or influenced by rules, regulations, manuals, procedures, prescribed work practices, principles, policies, or other written instruction of methods.

To evaluate this factor, classifiers ask such questions as:

- How extensively is the work and decision-making process controlled by written guidelines, manuals, procedures, policies, statutes, rules and , etc.
- Are the written policies/procedures general or specific?
- How much initiative/deviation is the employee allowed in planning or executing the work?

4. INITIATIVE & ORIGINALITY:

This factor concerns the degree of inventiveness, imagination, and ability to innovate or create that is required in the work, the extent to which the work requires new approaches or previously unused methods and deviations from standard work practices. The resourcefulness or ingenuity required to solve new problems or old problems in new ways is the crux of this factor.

WHAT COUNTS:

- NATURE, VARIETY & COMPLEXITY
- NATURE OF SUPERVISION RECEIVED
- NATURE OF AVAILABLE GUIDELINES
- INITIATIVE & ORIGINALITY
- PURPOSE & NATURE OF PERSON-TO-PERSON WORK RELATIONSHIPS
- NATURE & SCOPE OF RECOMMENDATIONS, DECISIONS, COMMITMENTS & CONSEQUENCES OF ERROR
- NATURE & EXTENT OF SUPERVISION EXERCISED OVER WORK OF OTHER EMPLOYEES
- QUALIFICATIONS RECEIVED

CLASSIFICATION FACTORS WHAT COUNTS CONT.

To evaluate this factor, classifiers ask such questions as:

- How much initiative is given the employee in deciding how to accomplish the assignments?
- How much and what type of review is given to the work?
- Is the employee required to devise new methods or procedures?
- Does the employee adapt existing methods to fit the assignment?
- Does the employee work out solutions to problems for which no existing solution or precedent exists?
- Does the employee analyze and evaluate the recommendations of others in relation to the above?

5. PURPOSE & NATURE OF PERSON-TO-PERSON WORK RELATIONSHIPS:

This factor includes what, why, how, and with whom relations are maintained with persons not in the supervisory chain based within or outside of the agency. The purpose of these relationships typically include one or more of the following:

- (a) to give or secure information,
- (b) render personal service,
- (c) perform administrative services,
- (d) explain policies or method,
- (e) interpret programs, plans or individual actions,
- (f) coordinate and secure cooperation, or
- (g) resolve controversies by means of personal contact.

To evaluate this factor, classifiers ask such questions as:

- What contacts does the employee have with others? Within the agency? Outside the agency?
- What is the purpose of these contacts?
- What type of subject matter is dealt with?
- Is the subject matter simple, complex, broad, narrow, controversial, sensitive, routine or recurring?
- What conditions make it easy or difficult to accomplish these contacts?

- Does the employee have the authority to commit the agency to a course of action and its resources?

6. NATURE & SCOPE OF RECOMMENDATIONS, DECISIONS, COMMITMENTS & CONSEQUENCE OF ERROR:

This factor reflects the questions, problems, or types of cases in which the employee makes recommendations, decisions, commitments, or conclusions which affect operations, plans, programs, methods, or policies; and the degree of finality in such judgments or actions as measured against such criteria as instructions, delegated authority, and review by supervisors, or agency policies, rules, regulations, statutes, or precedents.

To evaluate this factor, classifiers ask such questions as:

- What decisions does the employee make which are not reviewed by others?
- If the employee's decisions are reviewed, what is the type and extent of this review?
- What types of problems does the employee encounter and how important are they to the goals and objectives of the agency?
- What is the employee's responsibility for making recommendations or taking actions on the agency's programs and policies?
- How final are the employee's decisions and recommendations in relation to the functions of the agency?
- What would be the consequence of errors or inadequacies in these recommendations and decisions?

7. NATURE & EXTENT OF SUPERVISION EXERCISED OVER WORK OF OTHER EMPLOYEES:

"Nature of supervision exercised" includes supervisory responsibilities in areas such as setting policies; establishing objectives; planning, organizing and establishing work flow; making assignments and reviewing work; selecting, training, and rating performance of employees; coordinating production; and attending to the personnel and administrative func-



WHAT DOESN'T COUNT:

- FINANCIAL NEED
- RELATIVE EFFICIENCY
- VOLUME OF WORK
- UNUSUAL QUALIFICATIONS
- SCARCITY OF NEW EMPLOYEES
- LENGTH OF SERVICE
- PERSONALITY

CLASSIFICATION FACTORS WHAT COUNTS CONT.

tions of the organization.

“Extent” includes the degree of independence and responsibility with which such functions are preformed, the scope of performance as reflected in the difficulty of the supervisory work, the size and complexity of the organization, the variety of functions, etc.

To evaluate this factor, classifiers ask such questions as:

- What is the extent of the employee’s authority to formulate policies and the scope of those policies?
- What is the responsibility for control over the objectives and purpose of the work supervised and the form and quality of the end product?
- Does the employee plan for an entire organization or plan specific techniques for given tasks.
- What is the employee’s responsibility for organization of work, workflow and methods of operation? Does the employee determine work methods or assure that approved methods are carried out?
- What latitude does the employee have in making work assignments?
- What type of review does the employee make of the work of others—detailed, general, technical, policy, administrative?
- What is the extent of the employee’s responsibility in selecting, promoting, transferring, evaluating and disciplining employee and settling grievances?



- What general administrative responsibilities does the employee have (procurement, budget, financial management, human resources management, legislative, etc)?
- What is the number and class level of subordinates supervised? What is the complexity of the organization supervised?

8. QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED:

“Qualifications required” include the knowledge, skills, abilities and other requirements for successful performance of the work. The qualifications required should be reflected in the duties and the other seven factors, as well as the tasks assigned to the position.

To evaluate this factor, classifiers ask such questions as:

- What knowledge is required for reasonable success in the position?
- What knowledge is required upon entry to the job?
- Which knowledge can be gained on the job in a reasonable period?
- What skills and what level of proficiency are required for the position? What kinds of machines and equipment are used?
- Are skills required at entry or can they be acquired during the probationary period?
- What general abilities are required for the position?



In order to assign positions to a job class that best describes the primary and essential duties and responsibilities, comparisons are made between the position and job class specifications.

MAINTENANCE REQUESTS

MAKING MINOR CHANGES TO CLASS SPECIFICATIONS

Revising job class specifications doesn’t always require a classification study. Changes to the title, minimum qualifications, examples of duties, or knowledge, skills, and abilities of an existing job class specification can be initiated by submitting a Maintenance Request. The turnaround time for Maintenance Requests is generally no more than two weeks, and they involve relatively little effort on the part of either the requesting agency or DOP staff.

As a general rule Maintenance Requests cannot be used to alter job class concepts, class series structure, or salary range assignments; such changes may instead be addressed through the more extensive Classification Study process.

Submitting a Maintenance Request

Initiating a maintenance request is as easy as completing a simple

Cont. on page 8

MAINTENANCE REQUESTS MAKING MINOR CHANGES TO CLASS SPECIFICATIONS

form and submitting it to the Classification Studies Team leader. Maintenance requests must be submitted by a Division Director, Commissioner, or by Division of Personnel staff. The Maintenance Request form, which can be located at <http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=44>, asks for which section of the current job class specification language needs to be changed, the proposed change, and an explanation for the request. The Classification Studies Team leader will work with you to make sure that the proposed changes have the desired outcome.

In reviewing a maintenance requests, classification studies staff take into account the potential impact of the proposed change on other levels of the class series. After an initial review, the request is forwarded to other classification staff, affected department representatives, DOP Employee Services recruitment staff, and DOP Management Services team leaders for a five-

day comment period. After reviewing input, the classification studies staff makes a determination regarding the proposed change and implements any job-class specification revisions immediately with concurrent notification to DOP staff and affected agencies. On rare occasions, further discussion is necessary to reconcile conflicting opinions among departments or divisions that use the job classes. Since job class specifications are posted online, Workplace Alaska recruitment under the impacted job class(es) must be closed for at least one day to remove the old specifications and post the revised version.

The Maintenance Request form and procedures are available on the DOP Classification website at <http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=44>.

HR

*...studies are a
carefully
orchestrated
collaborative
process between
agencies and
DOP.*

JOB CLASSIFICATION STUDIES

The Division of Personnel (DOP) conducts a job classification study to establish new job classes or change the definition or distinguishing characteristics, class concepts, class series structure, or salary-range assignments of one or more existing job classes. A classification study may impact only one department or involve positions from numerous agencies. In either situation, studies are a carefully orchestrated collaborative process between agencies and DOP. Studies vary in scope from a single, unique position to hundreds of related positions. Along this continuum, a study may take only a few days to complete, or it may require the concentrated, ongoing joint efforts of numerous DOP and agency staff over several months.

How are job classes identified for review?

The Classification Section confers annually in late spring with the Administrative Services Director of each of the fourteen departments to revise and prioritize a department's list of pending study requests. DOP's client service standards commit the division to completing annually at least the top-priority study request submitted by each department and then addressing

lower-priority requests equitably and in priority order as time and workloads allow. Other class studies may be proposed by DOP and are included in the study schedule if, after discussion among affected Administrative Services Directors, sufficient support for the study exists.

How to make a job class study request?

A request to conduct a classification study must be approved and submitted by a department's Administrative Services Director. Managers or supervisors wishing to initiate a request are advised to work through their respective Administrative Services Directors. The requesting Administrative Services Director completes a Classification Study Request form and submits it to the DOP Class Study Supervisor.

The Classification Study Request form and procedures are available on the DOP Classification website at <http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=44>.

How are studies conducted?

The job-class study process is multi-phased, involving several rounds of information exchange between the partici-

JOB CLASSIFICATION STUDIES

pating department(s) and Classification staff. DOP and department management jointly determine the proposed study's scope, timeline, and potential cost implications. DOP and the departments also discuss each party's responsibility to provide information and review drafts.

Departments included in the study prepare and submit updated position descriptions (PDs). The Classification staff make presentations as needed to agency staff on the study process and how to write position descriptions. Designated department representatives make a reciprocal presentation to Classification staff on the nature of the work under review. DOP staff review the PDs and organizational charts, group together positions that are similar in kind and level of work, develop a new or amended class series structure, and begin drafting the related job class specifications for each level in the series.

Each affected department is offered the opportunity to review and comment on draft specifications. Together, those involved in the study finalize specifications, and DOP allocates individual positions to the new job class specifications. Draft allocations are forwarded to each department for review, and the department is provided the opportunity to submit additional information and to request reconsidera-

tion. A different Classification staff member analyzes requests for reconsideration, and the final results are returned to the department.

Workplace Alaska recruitment under the impacted classes is temporarily suspended while the study is finalized. By agreement with the department, the posting of job vacancies is suspended, and all outstanding recruitments are concluded. The lead analyst for the study prepares an internal alignment analysis of the new job classes based upon the principle of like pay for like work and then recommends pay ranges for the new classes. Again, the affected departments have the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed salary range assignments. After discussion and finalization of pay ranges, DOP issues a memorandum documenting the entire study process and its outcomes and posts the new or revised job class specifications on Workplace Alaska.

Affected agencies are notified of the study's implementation date. DOP Technical Services staff are available to answer employee questions about the effect on pay, probationary status, and merit date. Upon implementation, individual positions are allocated to the new job classes, entries are made to the payroll system, and labor unions are notified of bargaining unit changes.

HR

WHAT DOES HR CONSIDER WHEN ALLOCATING?

When a classification action is requested, the classifier begins by reviewing the description of the work set out in the position description. Then, they look at how that work fits into the overall structure of the organization unit to which the position is assigned. In addition to the Classification Factors explained in another article, the classifier also looks at the work of the entire organization unit. They ask questions such as:

Is the work new to the organization unit or was it being performed before?
If it was being performed before, have the duties of the other position changed?
Is there work product that can be shown that demonstrates the kind and level of work articulated in the position description?

Does the size and complexity of the organization support the level of position requested?
How does the work in this organization compare to work in other organizations throughout the executive branch?

If a classifier has questions related to any of these topics, he or she will contact the supervisor or incumbent of the position to ask clarifying questions. Occasionally, the classifier may conduct a more extended interview, or a desk audit, of the incumbent and supervisor to gain a more in-depth understanding of the work performed and how it fits in to the rest of the organization. The classifier may also request that updated position descriptions be submitted for other positions in the organization.

HR

If a classifier has questions related to the work set out in the position description, he or she will contact the supervisor or incumbent of the position to ask clarifying questions.

PAY IMPACTS OF RECLASSIFICATION TO A HIGHER RANGE

Did you know there are major differences between bargaining unit contracts in how an employee's pay is handled when reclassified to a higher range? In some cases the actions or decisions you make in assigning work make a significant difference in managing your budgetary resources. To help explain the differences, let's take a look at the GGU and SU bargaining unit contracts in effect July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2007.

Reclassifications to a higher range in the General Government Unit (GGU):

An employee occupying a position which is reallocated to a classification which carries a higher pay range and who continues in the same position shall enter the new range at step A or at any higher step which provides a one step pay increase. The employee serves a new probationary period and is eligible for a step increase in approximately twelve months.

Reclassifications to a higher range in the Supervisory Unit (SU):

If an employee is reclassified to a higher salary range based upon work they will be assigned,

their step placement is governed by the promotion language of the contract, which results in either a one or two step pay increase depending on where they are in the performance evaluation cycle. The employee serves a new probationary period and is eligible for a step increase in approximately twelve months.

If an employee is reclassified to a higher salary range based upon work already being performed, the anniversary date and step placement of the employee remains unchanged and the employee moves step for step. The employee does not serve a new probationary period and is eligible for a step increase on the same date as they would have received an increase in the previous classification.

In both the GGU & SU contracts:

When a whole job class is moved from one salary range to a higher salary range, the action is called a salary range change. The merit anniversary date and step placement of all employees subject to the action shall remain unchanged – employees move step for step. The employees do not serve a new probationary period and are eligible for a step increase on the same date as they would have received one at the previous range.



.....the actions or decisions you make in assigning work make a significant difference in managing your budgetary resources.

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ONLINE POSITION DESCRIPTION (OPD)

The Division of Personnel is in the process of developing a web based electronic system for submitting, approving, and viewing position descriptions (PDs) and related position control actions such as location or status changes. The new Online Position Description system (OPD) will replace paper documents currently being used for classification actions. OPD will also include management reporting tools that will allow agencies to track PD submissions, look up existing PDs, and view current and historical actions by a variety of search criteria.

The new system will allow a user to revise or create a PD online and forward it for approval. Once approvals are received from division and department officials, the PD will be directed to the Classification Section where it will be assigned to a classifier and allocated. The originator, supervisor, division approver, department approver, and other department users with "viewing" access will be able to

track the progress of the PD throughout the various steps of the approval and allocation process. Once the submission is finalized, the new record may be viewed by anyone with internet access.

All state employees will have the ability to search for a public position description by entering the PCN of the position. Department and division approvers will have the ability to view more detailed search results for their department, using criteria such as division, job class title, location, position type, and bargaining unit. Other features include the ability to attach electronic WORD, Visio, and PDF files; to use an existing PD as a template for creating a new PD; or to submit information for a classification study.

Currently, the system is being developed and tested internally. Look for more information about the project in future issues of HR Solutions and the HR Update.

HR

ONLINE POSITION DESCRIPTION DEPARTMENT ROLES

Submission	A Position Description or position control action that requires department and division of personnel approval.
Originator	A user who creates a new submission. Forwards submission to supervisor or supervisor designee.
Supervisor or Supervisor Designee	Reviews and edits submissions. May approve and forward submission to division approver step, or return submission to originator.
Division or Department Reviewer	Reviews and edits incoming submissions for either a division or department approver; returns submission or recommends approval (by finalizing review). Cannot approve submission and send forward to department approver or to DOP.
Division Approver	Division Director or designee may edit a submission, approve and forward to department approver step, or return to a previous step.
Department Reviewer	ASD or designee may edit a submission, approve and forward to DOP, or return to a previous step.
Department/Division Approver	For position control changes only: ability to review, edit, approve and forward directly to DOP, and return to a previous step.
Division or Department Viewer	Ability to view submissions and reports for either the division or department, with no edit or approval authority.
User Administration	Responsible for creating and maintaining access for users in the division and/or department roles (except for the department approver: which is maintained by DOP).
One-Time Reviewer	A user who may be chosen at any step to either review, or review and edit, a submission.



ALL ABOUT NONPERMANENT POSITIONS

On occasion the need exists to hire an individual to perform work of a temporary nature. A nonpermanent position may be established to meet this need. A nonpermanent position may be established for several reasons:

- to fill in for a permanent employee during a period of leave;
- to perform the work of a vacant position during recruitment;
- to perform a temporary work assignment or project;
- to reduce a backlog; or
- to perform the work of a newly authorized permanent position while the position is being created and the permanent recruitment is underway.

A nonpermanent appointment differs from an emergency appointment in that an emergency position is limited to 30 calendar days and may be authorized only under conditions necessitating immediate action to provide for work that must be continued in the public interest. If time allows for the establishment of a nonpermanent position, then an emergency does not exist and an emergency appointment cannot be made.

Establishing Nonpermanent Positions

To establish a nonpermanent position, the supervisor must complete the Request for Nonpermanent Employee form available on the Division of Personnel web site at <http://dop.state.ak.us> under Quick Links, HR Forms.

The supervisor should:

- ✓ Complete the position status information at the top of the form.
 - ✓ Select the reason for the request.
 - ✓ Determine the expected duration of the position.
 - ✓ Describe the reason for the request and the essential duties to be performed. Provide sufficient information to determine the proper job class.
 - ✓ Provide the name, title, and phone number of hiring manager. Sign and date.
- When the request is complete and approved by the proper division authority, forward the request to the department's Administrative Services Director (ASD) for review and signature as the certifying officer.
 - The ASD's signature certifies that sufficient budget author-

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A nonpermanent position may be established for several reasons

ALL ABOUT NON-PERMANENT POSITIONS CONT.

Short-term nonpermanent positions are typically established for the maximum period allowed by the collective bargaining agreements.

Short-term nonpermanent positions normally will not be extended beyond the 90 or 120-day limit provided in the collective bargaining agreements.

ity exists to establish the requested position. The ASD's office will provide the necessary funding source information and forward the original request to the Division of Personnel, Classification Section (Mail Stop 0201) for review.

□ The Classification Section will review the request, determine the proper job class, assign a position control number (PCN), establish the position in AKPAY, and notify the hiring manager and the ASD of the final classification action via e-mail. The message will include the PCN, the job class, the position type, the effective date, and the expiration date. The e-mail message will direct the hiring manager to Employee Services to initiate the recruitment process.

□ Short-term nonpermanent positions are typically established for the maximum period allowed by the collective bargaining agreements. Short-term positions in the General Government Unit may be established for up to 120 days. Short-term positions in the Supervisory and Confidential Units may be established for up to 90 days. If the work is expected to exceed 90 or 120 days (depending upon the labor agreement), a long-term position must be requested. *Short-term nonpermanent positions normally will not be extended beyond the 90 or 120-day limit provided in the collective bargaining agreements.*

Hiring Nonpermanent Employees

After a nonpermanent position is authorized and established in AKPAY, the supervisor may initiate action to make an appointment. The type of nonpermanent position will determine the appropriate recruitment process. Nonpermanent employees must meet the minimum qualifications of the approved job class.

Long-term nonpermanent positions are typically filled through recruitment on Workplace Alaska. The supervisor should complete a Workplace Alaska job request and work with Employee Services to initiate recruitment and ensure a legal hire. Long-term positions may also be filled by a former employee eligible for rehire in the job class.

Nonpermanent positions in the Labor, Trades & Crafts Unit are filled by referral from the union hiring hall. Contact Employee Services to initiate the job referral and ensure a legal hire.

Short-term nonpermanent positions may be filled through Job Service Referrals, Workplace Alaska, rehire, or other approved methods. Contact

the Employee Services Section to initiate the recruitment and ensure a legal hire.

Appointing Nonpermanent Employees

When the hire is approved and the job offer has been accepted, the hiring manager submits the completed hiring packet to Technical Services (Payroll). The packet can be accessed on the Division of Personnel web site at <http://dop.state.ak.us> under Quick Links, HR Forms, New Employee Packets.

Technical Services staff will review the hiring packet forms to ensure the employee and supervisor completed them correctly and will then process the action. The employee will be "appointed" in the payroll system and can then be paid. Timesheets received each pay period will be reviewed and processed by Technical Services to ensure accurate and timely processing during the period of employment.

When a Nonpermanent Position Expires

□ On or about the 15th of each month the Classification Section provides each department with a list of nonpermanent positions that will expire the following month.

□ Technical Services will contact the supervisor concerning the pending separation and provide the necessary forms to complete the action. Upon receipt of the final paperwork, Technical Services will process the separation action and final pay for the employee.

□ Incumbents may not work beyond the last day for which the nonpermanent position is authorized.

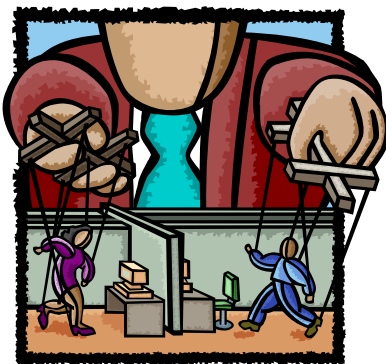
□ Short-term nonpermanent positions are typically established for the maximum period allowed by the labor agreements; typically they will not be extended beyond the contractual limit.

□ Long-Term and Project nonpermanent positions may be extended at the request of the department's Administrative Services Director. Requests to extend these nonpermanent positions must be submitted to the Classification Section at least one week prior to the expiration date. Requests to extend a nonpermanent position must include: 1) the PCN, 2) the class title, 3) the reasons the position cannot end on the established end date, and 4) the proposed new end date.

ARBITRATOR'S CORNER NEPOTISM/ETHICS

On August 15, 2005, the Alaska Administrative Manual (AAM) will be updated to include a provision outlining the State's policy on Ethics & Nepotism. While neither the Ethics Act nor the Nepotism provisions of Alaska statute or regulation are new, the combination of these two provisions has provided state employees with very clear guidelines on familial relationships in the workplace.

AAM 100.50 prohibits any state employee from being in an employment relationship with a member of his or her immediate family. Employment relationship is defined as any work related relationship where one individual has the authority to approve or effectively recommend actions that will impact the other employee's wages, hours, terms or conditions of employment. Immediate Family Member is defined as an employee's spouse; biological child, step child, or adoptive child; parent or parent-in-law; sibling or sibling-in-law; grandparent; aunt or uncle; or a person cohabiting with the employee in a conjugal relationship that is not a legal marriage.



Why does the State of Alaska prohibit nepotism in Executive Branch employment?

Nepotism policies span a wide range of needs across various public and private employers. At one extreme, some employers promote hiring the family members of current employees or the owners of the business. At the other extreme, employers choose a policy of denying employment to anyone with a family member currently employed by the organization. So, why do these polar opposite types of policies exist across the population of employers?

Employers that choose policies supporting hiring family members of existing employees perceive specific benefits associated with their policy choice. Perceived benefits include employee loyalty and trust. Additionally, many employers find it easier to recruit the family members of existing employees. Employers hire family members because they find employees that have a ready understanding of the needs of the business and the conditions of the workplace. Often employers believe that they will find similar positive work habits from one family member to another. The ultimate expression of these perceived benefits exists

when the business owner employs a son, daughter or spouse.

Employers that choose the most restrictive policies regarding nepotism believe that the negatives of hiring immediate family members and spouses far outweigh any benefit. Perceived negatives include potential adverse impact on morale of other employees, lack of loyalty to the company, and the potential for fraud facilitated by greater loyalty to family relationships than to the employer. The most extreme policies denying all employment opportunities to family members of existing employees can fail in court when tested against equal employment laws. Courts have found that employers need to demonstrate the business purpose of the more restrictive policies and demonstrate the clear negative impact of a less restrictive policy.

State of Alaska Nepotism/Ethics policy is more refined and balanced than either of the two extremes discussed above. As a public employer,

the State has an interest in demonstrating fairness in hiring and other employment decisions so that it meets the test of public sector accountability. Unlike private sector employers, the State's policies come from a much stronger footing than the simple business needs of the organization. Constitutional and statutory provisions give the Executive Branch clear direction on how to clearly demonstrate public accountability in human resource practices.

The Executive Branch Ethics Act AS 39.52 and the Executive Branch Code of Ethics 9 AAC.52 contain clear prohibitions against nepotism in employment decisions. In addition, AS 39.25.010 (the State Personnel Act) articulates the foundation of the merit principle in employment. Of specific interest to the issue of nepotism are subsections 3 and 4:

(3) retention of employees with permanent status on the basis of the adequacy of their performance, reasonable efforts of temporary duration for correction in inadequate performance, and separation for cause;

(4) equal treatment of applicants and employees with regard only to consideration within the merit principles of em-

"Employment relationship is defined as any work related relationship where one individual has the authority to approve or effectively recommend actions that will impact the other employee's wages, hours, terms or conditions of employment."

"Immediate Family Member " is defined as an employee's spouse; biological child, step child, or adoptive child; parent or parent-in-law; sibling or sibling-in-law; grandparent; aunt or uncle; or a person cohabiting with the employee in a conjugal relationship that is not a legal marriage."

ARBITRATOR'S CORNER NEPOTISM/ETHICS CONT.

ployment; and

Even without the black letter prohibitions of the Code of Ethics, the Nepotism Statute and the Ethics Act, items (3) and (4) of the Merit Principles clearly exclude the positive consideration of one's family relationship in an employment decision. "Adequacy of performance," the basis for retention in item (3), could easily be voided when an employee is supervising an immediate family member. The more extensive restriction of item (4) further expands the nepotism prohibition to all other employment decisions. Employment decisions properly based on merit and performance are more legally defensible than employment decisions based on who someone is or what they are.

The Executive Branch Nepotism/Ethics Policy is good employment practice. An organization operated for the benefit of all citizens cannot allow even the perception that employment decisions are the province of family relationships. All people would agree that it is patently unfair for a State supervisor to hire their son, sister, spouse or other immediate family member because of their personal relationship. Most would agree that even in the face of objective process, immediate family relationships in the State workplace always give the perception of unfairness. By their very nature these relationships rightfully exclude other people. In the context of family, exclusivity is perceived as a positive. In the employment context, family exclusivity results in automatic employment discrimination that is in conflict with State statute and regulation.

Poor morale may develop when there is nepotism in the workplace. Employees without the family relationship perceive that they may be passed over for promotion, excluded from training opportunities or receive lesser terms and conditions of employment. Additionally, they feel at a disadvantage when disputes arise between them and the boss's son, sister or spouse. None of these feelings, perceptions or impacts contribute to completing the various missions of State government.

As an employer, the State of Alaska's Nepotism/Ethics Policy does not restrict all employment opportunities for immediate family members of current State employees. Instead, our policy is a balanced approach, reflecting the needs of the employer and compliance with equal employment laws. To strike the balance, employment of immediate family members is restricted from only those jobs in which the current employee may have hiring authority or supervisory authority. To further balance the State's needs, the policy provides a waiver process for employees for some employment situations involving far removed or very indirect reporting relationships. At no time is a waiver granted for direct reporting relationships.

For more information on this topic, visit the Division of Personnel home page. Look for Nepotism/Ethics Policy Frequently Asked Questions, which is listed in the Hot Topics section. The administrative manual provisions are based on AS39.52 Executive Branch Ethics Act, AS 39.90.020 Nepotism Statute, AS 39.25 State Personnel Act, and 2 AAC 07.950 Nepotism.

HR

Employment decisions properly based on merit and performance are more legally defensible than employment decisions based on who someone is or what they are. The Executive Branch Nepotism/Ethics Policy is good employment practice.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR KASSIS? THOUGHTS ON INDIVIDUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Of the 22 keys to a meaningful workplace, the one that seems to stir up the most raw emotion is "self-identity" -- the driving desire most people have to exert their individuality in the workplace.

Since we're talking about differences, let's take a slightly different approach with this column. Instead of pondering other people's differences, let's address yours. And instead of me doing all the writing, you can do some. I promise that the five or so minutes you spend on this will be time well spent. Ready?

1. What unique knowledge do you bring to the workplace? Pinpoint what you and you alone contribute in the way of needed know-how. Jot down your top three responses.

2. What are your special skills and abilities? The key word here is "special" -- things that only you possess, that help you turn an average job into something magnificent. Again, write down your three biggies.

3. What about your style? In twenty words max, describe how it's completely different from the many other styles that surround

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DO YOU KNOW YOUR KASSIS? THOUGHTS ON INDIVIDUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE CONT.

you in the workplace.

4. Think about your interests. We're not talking about passing fancies, but about your deepest interests -- things you could explore and engage in for hours and hours just because you find them so fulfilling. Note that your interests and your skills might be worlds apart.

5. Now for the grand finale: How do your unique knowledge, skills, style, and deep interests benefit your colleagues or external customers? What might be the future benefits? Look back at your notes and come up with some concrete ideas. If you draw a blank, dig deeper. Unless you work for the Sisters of Charity, chances are your colleagues won't fully appreciate your differences unless they benefit from them in some way.

Free - Reprint This Article If this exercise seems a bit flat on the computer screen, that's because, well, because you're working on a computer screen. The solution? Hit the print button, take this article to your next meeting, and use it to seed a conversation with colleagues. You'll end up learning a lot more about the people around you, and they'll learn more about you.

Please note that we're dwelling on knowledge, skills, abilities, styles, and interests. There's no need to divulge anything that involves law-enforcement officials and/or large quantities of tequila.

Oh, and don't be surprised if the conversation gets stuck on knowledge, skills, and abilities -- or KSAs, as they're labeled in so many businesslike organizations. Styles and interests always get the back seat, maybe because they're not spelled out in job descriptions -- but more likely because KSASI would be such a clunky acronym. Fair enough! Let's move the letters and call it KASSI (rhymes with "sassy"). Such a lovely acronym! Now there's no excuse for not having a conversation that covers all the bases.

Of course, knowing more about yourself and your colleagues is just a first step. You need to act on this information -- and the sooner, the better.

If you've come to appreciate the fact that you're an awesome facilitator, but facilitation opportunities haven't come your way, go out and grab one. If all of your deep interests have a creative bent but your day-to-day work involves mind-numbing repetition, try to take on new activities or start looking for an entirely new position that calls for creativity. In these and all other situations, it almost always helps to talk things over with a colleague or two. Who knows, your sounding board just might point you to a ready-and-waiting opportunity.

Then there's the challenge of helping others. This is a tough proposition because it requires empathy, diplomacy, and sincerity -- all of which are seriously lacking in these sample comments:

"Hey, Gina, I understand you're big into hang-gliding. You sound like a real risk-taker. You're just the person to hang-glide over to the CEO and tell her about the dismal sales figures for this month."

"Sam, I didn't know you were so good with numbers! You can have the honor of crunching the data from our 1,319 field reps -- or was it 2,319? Anyway, I'll have the crate of paperwork shipped to your office. Actually, I think it's two or three crates."

After sharing the findings from a type-style inventory: "Wow, Chris, you have a really weird combination of personality traits. Remind me to invite you to my next



party!"

The alternative? As you learn more about your colleagues' know-how, skills, styles, and deep interests, take the conversation one big step further by gently exploring how this good stuff can be put to greater use in the workplace. There's no need for a choreographed conversation between "boss" and "employee." In fact, it works much better as an informal chat, often between friends. So what about it? Is there someone close by whose sense of self-identity needs your help?

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