

Wisconsin Human Resources Handbook

Chapter 450

Conducting or Assisting With a Personnel Management Survey

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Sec. 450.010 Introduction

The Office of State Employment Relations (OSER) may conduct a classification and/or compensation survey (i.e., personnel management survey) for many reasons. Surveys are usually justified when changes have occurred to positions in an occupational area and the duties performed are no longer described in the classification specification. A compensation survey may be appropriate when there are severe recruitment and/or retention problems existing in a specific classification area. An analysis should be completed to determine the appropriate type of survey(s) required and the classifications that should be included.

A survey may be requested by agencies, bargaining units, or initiated by OSER. Assistance may be required from the agency human resource offices impacted by the survey, or agencies may request permission to conduct their own specific occupational classification and/or compensation survey. This chapter contains information on the process agencies should follow to conduct a survey.

Sec. 450.020 Statutory Authority

Survey activity is the responsibility of OSER in maintaining the classification system.

1. Section 230.09(2)(am), Wis. Stats., states, “The director shall maintain and improve the classification plan to meet the needs of the service, using methods and techniques which may include personnel management surveys, individual position reviews, occupational group classification surveys, or other appropriate methods of position review. Such reviews may be initiated by the director after taking into consideration the recommendations of the appointing authority, or at his or her own discretion. The director shall establish, modify or abolish classifications as the needs of the service require.”
2. Section 230.09(2)(b), Wis. Stats., states, “To accommodate and effectuate the continuing changes in the classification plan as a result of the classification survey program and otherwise, the director shall, upon initial establishment of a classification, assign that class to the appropriate pay rate or range, and may, upon subsequent review, reassign classes to different pay rates or ranges. The director shall assign each class to a pay range according to the skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions required for the class, without regard to whether the class is occupied primarily by members of a certain gender or racial group. The director shall give notice to appointing authorities to permit them to make recommendations before final action is taken on any such assignment or reassignment of classes.”

Note: The pay range assignment of classifications represented by a collective bargaining agent is a mandatory subject of negotiations, as noted in s. 111.91(1), Wis. Stats. To that end, the director of OSER will attempt to reach agreement on the proposed pay range assignments of represented classifications with the affected employees' legally authorized representative prior to implementation of the classification structure.

3. Section 15.02(4), Wis. Stats., states in part, "The head may delegate and redelegate to any officer or employee of the department or independent agency any function vested by law in the head."

The Administrator of the Division of Compensation and Labor Relations has been delegated the *management* of classification creation, abolishment and modification. The Director retains the authority to approve classification creation, abolishment and modification.

Sec. 450.030 Assistance to OSER by Agencies

Whenever OSER conducts a personnel management survey, OSER will designate a staff person as the survey manager. The OSER survey manager will frequently enlist the assistance of agencies when conducting surveys, particularly when the classifications under review are used by multiple agencies. Agencies are asked to appoint a survey coordinator responsible for identifying benchmark positions, conducting audits, making classification and structure recommendations, ensuring the prompt delivery of accurate position descriptions (PDs), assisting in specification writing, and testifying at Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission (WERC) hearings as subject matter experts.

Following are the steps required of an agency:

1. Agency Survey Coordinator

Each affected agency identifies an HR contact responsible for the agency survey responsibilities and provides the phone number and e-mail address of that individual to the OSER Survey Manager responsible for oversight of the entire survey. The agency survey coordinator will be the primary contact with OSER throughout the survey process.

2. Benchmark Positions and Audits

The agency survey coordinator reviews all the positions at the agency included in the survey and identifies benchmark positions. It is important to the integrity of the survey that all PDs reviewed are accurate and up-to-date. Benchmark positions are those that are commonly found and defined and that will be used to make pay comparisons either within the agency or to comparable jobs outside the agency or they may be unique specialized positions. Benchmark positions include:

- a. Representative positions for a number of similar positions; and

Note: The majority of job duties should be compared. If there are several positions that have the majority of the exact or very similar duties, only one of those positions should be selected as a benchmark.

- b. Very unusual positions performing unique sets of duties or requiring specialized knowledge, skills, abilities, or credentials.

The agency survey coordinator should select employees for audit who are familiar with the position and who can articulate the complexities involved, and the knowledge and skills required to perform the job duties. It is recommended that the person selected for audit have performed the full set of assigned duties for a minimum of one year to ensure complete knowledge of them.

A list of benchmark positions should be submitted to OSER upon request, along with accurate PDs whenever possible. OSER will determine which positions it will audit. The agency survey coordinator may audit any other affected positions and is encouraged to do so. These audits will provide the agency survey coordinator with first-

hand knowledge of the positions, putting the coordinator in a better position to evaluate the usefulness of specification language under development. If the agency survey coordinator is new to the survey process, that person may accompany the OSER analyst to audits to learn about the audit process prior to conducting audits independently.

3. **Recommendations**

After the audit phase is completed, OSER and the agency survey coordinator(s) will meet to discuss preliminary findings. Discussions will include at a minimum:

- a. The number of classifications needed.
- b. The different allocations within a classification.
- c. The number of classification levels.
- d. The preliminary recommendations for pay range assignment.

Later recommendations will include the specific allocation of positions to classifications and levels.

4. **Specification Writing**

OSER is primarily responsible for writing the classification specifications when OSER conducts the survey. Agencies are encouraged to assist OSER in drafting specifications even if OSER is conducting the survey, particularly if some of the classifications involved affect only one or two state agencies. OSER will provide a format for the classification specifications and will review, modify (as appropriate) and approve them. OSER will discuss any problems in the proposed classification specifications with the survey coordinator and explain the need for changes prior to making the proposed changes.

5. **Position Descriptions**

When the survey is close to implementation, accurate PDs are required to make appropriate classification decisions for each position. It is the responsibility of the agency survey coordinator to ensure timely receipt of the PDs that may be required by OSER. It is not necessary that a PD be updated or rewritten if the one on file is accurate. However, an older PD that is still accurate should be initialed and dated by the supervisor and employee to confirm accuracy. (See Chapter 310–Position Descriptions of the *Wisconsin Human Resources Handbook*.)

If an agency maintains PDs electronically, they do not have to submit signed or initialed copies to OSER. However, a hand-signed and dated copy of the PD must be maintained by the agency and must be produced in the event of a classification transaction appeal, even if electronic signatures are used.

6. **Implementation**

Either the agency survey coordinator will make a recommendation of the appropriate new classification for each position to the OSER Survey Manager or the coordinator may be delegated survey implementation authority by OSER. Such delegated authority will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Disagreement between OSER and the agency survey coordinator will be discussed between the parties to resolve the disagreement. OSER retains final authority for the survey class decisions unless implementation is delegated to the agency. If delegated, the agency survey coordinator makes the classification decision and defends any appealed decisions before the WERC if the decision is appealed.

7. **Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission Hearings**

OSER is the primary party responsible for defending appeals to the WERC unless implementation has been delegated to the agency. Survey coordinators, and supervisors of surveyed positions, may be asked to testify as a

subject matter expert regarding positions in their agency. (See Chapter 420—Appeal Procedures for Classification Actions of the *Wisconsin Human Resources Handbook*.)

If an agency has been delegated authority to implement the survey, that agency, along with the survey coordinator, will be the primary party responsible for defending appeals to the WERC.

Sec. 450.040 Agency-Conducted Survey

Agencies may formally request authorization to conduct a survey of a specific occupational area(s) from OSER. The classification(s) requested should be either (1) located only within the requesting agency or (2) contain an allocation unique to the requesting agency. If similar allocations in a classification are used by other agencies, an agreement allowing such a survey must be made with the other agency or agencies prior to OSER's authorization.

For surveys conducted by an agency, OSER will oversee the survey process, hold meetings or otherwise share information with survey coordinators and provide any assistance needed, such as developing a timeline, conducting audits, making class structure and classification decisions, writing specifications, implementing the survey process through the bulletin process, and testifying as a subject matter expert at the WERC. When an agency conducts the survey on behalf of OSER, the agency survey coordinator is relied upon to draft the specifications, with oversight and final approval authority resting with OSER.

The request must be submitted in writing to the Division of Compensation and Labor Relations (DCLR) and must include:

1. Name of the agency survey coordinator, including telephone number and e-mail address.
2. Justification for the request (see number 1 below, Problem Identification in Support of a Formal Survey Request).
3. Classification(s) included.
4. Affected employees, along with their classification and current pay range.
5. Steps that will be taken to complete and implement the survey (see number 2 below, Determine the Steps to Necessary to Complete the Survey).
6. An anticipated timeline detailing major steps in the process and an anticipated completion date (see number 3 below, Timeline).
7. The proposed new pay range assignment, if determined at this time (see number 4 below, New Pay Range Assignments and Funding).
8. The individual who will be responsible for the appeal process (see number 5 below, Appeal Process).
9. How the survey results will be funded (e.g., agency funding).

OSER will assess the request, respond in writing, and approve, modify, or deny the requested survey. A modification or denial may be based on factors such as statewide equity, impact on labor relations, alternative proposals, or recruitment and retention issues.

Note: Authorization of such a review by OSER does not automatically ensure implementation of the results. OSER is required to take into consideration statewide equity with other classifications, labor relations issues, and other factors that could impact the results of the agency specific survey.

1. Problem Identification in Support of a Formal Survey Request

Personnel Management Surveys are typically conducted to resolve problems that occur in the areas of classification, compensation, recruitment and retention. Agencies are asked to assess and identify problems occurring in their agency. Problems may include:

- a. Classification: Identify all problems the agency is experiencing with any aspects of the current classification structure. Examples of specific problems within this broad area may include:
 - 1) Changes in the technology, organization, occupation, equipment, statutory authority, etc., which are not identified in the existing classification specification(s).
 - 2) Lack of identification of duties and responsibilities and position types or specializations in the existing classification specification(s).
 - 3) Inability to make clear distinctions between class levels or class series based on the existing classification specification.
 - 4) Presence of inequitable or inappropriate pay range alignments between positions in the same occupational area being reviewed.
 - 5) Insufficient classification series or classification levels to identify distinctly different kinds of work.
 - 6) Concerns regarding assignment to the appropriate occupational area/bargaining unit.
- b. Compensation: Identify all problems the agency is experiencing with any of the current pay range assignments of included classes. (Contact the DCLR Bureau of Compensation if you have questions.) Examples of specific problems within this area may include:
 - 1) Failure of the existing classifications and pay range assignments to competitively compensate positions within the classification series, the organization, the occupation or the labor market.
 - 2) The presence of compensation compression between supervisors and subordinates.
 - 3) Presence of other compensation issues such as hazardous duty, supplemental pay, protective status designation, Fair Labor Standards Act designation, etc.
- c. Recruitment: Identify all problems the agency is experiencing with any aspects of attracting sufficiently qualified applicants. Examples of specific problems within this broad area may include:
 - 1) Necessity for specialized qualifications that affect the recruitment effort.
 - 2) Necessity for licensure, certification, or registration that affects the recruitment effort.
 - 3) Necessity of operating specialized or highly technical equipment.
 - 4) Area of competition (local, statewide, nationwide, etc.) required to attract sufficient qualified applicants.
 - 5) Necessity of Hiring Above the Minimum (HAM), Temporary Appointment Maximum (TAM) or a Raised Minimum Rate (RMR) to attract or retain sufficient candidates.
 - 6) Lack of sufficient flexibility to downgrade positions for developmental purposes.

- d. Retention: Identify all problems the agency is experiencing with any aspect of retaining qualified employees. Examples of specific problems within this broad area may include:
 - 1) Number of employees who left a position, including the reasons positions are vacated.
 - 2) Inability to retain staff at certain levels (i.e., entry, senior, etc.).
 - 3) Presence of pay compression between supervisors and subordinates.
 - 4) Lack of advancement opportunities within a classification series.
 - 5) Inability to retain staff due to low salaries.
- e. Other: Identify any other problems experienced or that may result from the implementation of a survey. This can include such things as:
 - 1) The relationship of the classifications included in the survey with other classes that may be similar or in a closely related occupational area.
 - 2) The impact of a survey upon supervisors and/or managers of the surveyed classification(s).
 - 3) The organization hierarchy between agencies with similar positions, if known.

It is important for the agency to consider other classifications that may be impacted by changing the classifications included in the survey. Agencies should consider historic classification links and determine if the link continues to be justified.

2. Determine the Steps Necessary to Complete the Survey

For a classification survey, the agency determines how much information is required to analyze the changes to the classification(s) and how many different positions are included in the survey.

- a. Classification Survey: The survey analysis may be by whole job analysis or employ a structured job evaluation methodology.
 - 1) **Whole job classification system**: This is the method most often used by OSER. Jobs are grouped together in common classifications based upon an unstructured or partially structured analysis of the whole job. Jobs are compared against each other using factors listed in “Job evaluation methodologies” below. The job content is gathered by field audits of positions and/or by analyzing position descriptions.
 - 2) **Job evaluation methodologies**: This is useful when there is a full range of different types and levels of positions included in the survey and quantifiable information is required to determine the classification differences between positions. The type of information that is gathered and related includes: the scope and impact of a position’s duties; the complexity; consequence of error; the effect of action; the knowledge and skill required to perform the duties; the nature and purpose of contacts of the position with agency staff, other agencies, or private sector; the discretion and accountability of the position; and the surroundings and hazards of the positions. Some of the previous job evaluations that have been used successfully are the Factor Evaluation System (FES), the Wisconsin Quantitative Evaluation System (WQES), and Point Rating System (for Executive Salary Group [ESG] assignments).
- b. Compensation Survey: A compensation survey may accompany a classification survey or may be the sole information required for the survey. In either circumstance, a thorough labor market analysis should be completed to properly determine the most appropriate pay range assignment of surveyed

positions based upon the external market information obtained and/or the internal pay lines of other related positions. (Contact the DCLR Bureau of Compensation with questions.) The following will assist the agency in collecting valid compensation comparisons:

- 1) Data gathered by telephone is acceptable when documented and must be detailed sufficiently to ensure appropriate comparisons have been used.
- 2) Ideally, the compensation data should be from the area(s) of recruitment. If the applicant pool is within a specific area of the state, gather information from that area only. If the applicant pool is from the surrounding states, gather the information from those states. If the position must be nationally recruited, it is important to recognize cost of living differences between the U.S. central region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota) and other U.S. regions (e.g. West Coast and New England) and to factor these differences into the external labor market analysis.
- 3) It is important to gather the same information from all contacts so that the information is valid and reliable. Ask each contact the same core questions, with follow-up or clarification as needed.
- 4) Determine the rates paid by other employers to persons having the same qualifications required for the agency positions(s), including advanced or unique qualifications. This will help ensure the job match is valid.
- 5) It may be difficult to include the private sector use of commissions or net private business profits when gathering labor market information, as these compensation tools do not always directly relate to base salaries. If you wish to include this information in your analysis, it should be reported separately from the average base salary as bonus compensation.
- 6) Items such as car allowances, stock options, or club memberships should not be included in the labor market analysis because the State of Wisconsin does not provide similar perquisite employee remuneration.

3. Timeline

It is important to develop a reasonable timeline for all portions of the survey. Many of the different components can overlap or be conducted simultaneously. A timeline must be prepared as part of the requesting agency's justification and should consist of:

- a. Identification of benchmark positions to audit. Benchmark positions incorporate jobs that are commonly found and defined and that are used to make pay comparisons either within the agency or to comparable jobs outside the agency. As a general rule of thumb, approximately 10 percent of the positions included in the survey should be audited. However, more or fewer positions may be audited, depending upon the specific circumstances.
- b. Audit. Much of the time spent conducting a survey is consumed by auditing. Audit questions are needed that will reveal the complexity and scope of the job duties, knowledge and skills required, special education or licensure requirements, the type of equipment used, personal contacts, etc. (See the Attachment for a list of possible audit questions.) The auditor will want to speak to supervisors and managers of positions in the included classifications because they bring a more global picture of the job duties under review and may provide important information not revealed by staff or apparent on the PD.
- c. Compensation. A compensation survey can be conducted by telephone or by sending out questionnaires. OSER also maintains a comprehensive library of third-party compensation survey reports available for review by agencies. If an agency is interested in reviewing this information or

developing a custom survey for distribution, please contact the Labor Market Specialist in the Bureau of Compensation.

- d. Analysis. After all the pertinent information is gathered, it must be analyzed. A reasonable structure that meets the needs of the agency and fits the existing allocations of the positions may be evident from the analysis. A recommendation is required that indicates indicating how many classifications are needed and how many levels in each classification series is necessary. A recommendation of the pay range assignment also should be provided based upon the compensation information obtained via the survey and/or a comparison with existing classifications that are very similar to the positions under survey. If the positions included in the survey are represented by a bargaining unit, the pay range assignment or reassignment is a mandatory subject of bargaining and must be negotiated with the affected employees' legally authorized representative (i.e., bargaining unit).
- e. Specification Development. The agency should consider if new classification specifications are required or if existing classification specifications may be modified. A rough draft of the classification specifications should be prepared prior to meeting with OSER. OSER retains the authority to make the final decision on specification content and is responsible for publication of the final specifications.

4. Funding

The agency must provide OSER with an estimate regarding the cost to implement the survey, the number of staff affected, and a statement that the head of the agency is willing to fund the survey implementation if that is the case, or a statement indicating the agency is unable to fund survey implementation. In the event the requesting agency is unable to fund implementation costs, OSER will assess the viability of funding through the compensation reserve. The agency also must submit a detailed list of all the employees affected by the survey, their current and proposed classification, current and proposed pay range assignment, and estimated cost to implement for each position. For survey implementation, the pay provisions in the Compensation Plan or relevant contract provisions must be followed.

5. Appeal Process

Agencies that are delegated authority to implement survey results also accept responsibility to defend the appeals filed with the WERC after implementation of the survey. (See Chapter 420—Appeal Procedures for Classification Actions of the *Wisconsin Human Resources Handbook*.) OSER staff may be asked by the agency defending the classification decision to testify as expert witnesses.

Sec. 450.050 Recommendation to OSER

When the classification and/or compensation survey is completed, the agency will meet with OSER to discuss their findings. The agency will provide and explain their analysis and recommendations. OSER will approve, modify, or deny the implementation of the survey and will respond in writing to the agency. OSER retains the final authority to approve, modify, or deny any changes to the classification specification and will formally announce the implementation of the survey results when appropriate.

If a pay range reassignment is recommended for represented classifications, that change must be accomplished through either the bargaining process or a periodic class meeting process during the life of the contract.

Sec. 450.060 Administrative Information

This chapter was created in January 2003, based on and as an expansion of bulletin CLR/POL-68, which is obsolete. The chapter was revised August 2010 to align it with statutory language and remove the delegation to the Administrator of the Division of Merit Recruitment and Selection.

AUDIT QUESTIONS

Following are examples of types of audit questions to consider. These questions are not all inclusive, nor should they all necessarily be asked. Select the types of questions that will help determine the complexity of the position, the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the job duties, etc. The questions are broken out by general questions, the scope and impact of a position's duties, the complexity, the consequence of error, the effect of action, the knowledge and skill required to perform the duties, the nature and purpose of contacts of the position with agency staff, other agencies, or private sector, the discretion and accountability of the position, and the surroundings and hazards of the positions. A review of the information or questions used for the Factor Evaluation System (FES), the Wisconsin Quantitative Evaluation System (WQES), and Point Rating System (for Executive Salary Group [ESG] assignments) can supplement this list.

1. **General:**

Is your position description (PD) accurate? If not, what should be changed? (The supervisor must confirm changes to a PD.)

How long have you been in your present position?

Provide an overview of your work unit and program area. How many people work in your unit?

Is there anyone else performing similar job duties? If so, on what basis are assignments made to different people or how is the work divided?

Do you deal with confidential/sensitive information in your position? What is the nature of that information?

Describe your job duties.

2. **Scope and impact:**

What is the scope of your authority?

Do you make decisions that do not require higher approval and that generally are not reviewed? Provide an example.

How often does this occur?

Do you have the authority to change results, or do you recommend, or do you coordinate requests?

3. **Complexity:**

How does your position receive its work?

What type of instruction is given at the time you receive your assignments?

How do you decide what is to be done and how it is to be done?

Is your work well defined by statutes, regulations, and clearly established office policies or guidelines?

What manuals or guidelines exist that are of value or assistance in the performance of your work? Provide an example.

For those aspects of your work where no manuals or guidelines exist, how do you decide how to proceed? How often does this occur? Provide an example.

What do you consider your most complex job duties?

4. **Consequence of error:**

How is accuracy measured?

What are the consequences of making an error?

How can an error be corrected?

5. **Effect of action:**

Whom does your work impact?

Does your work result in a finished product? If so, what is it used for? Who reviews it and to what extent?

Do you have responsibility for developing and implementing policies?

6. **Knowledge, skills and abilities:**

What special knowledge is required to perform your job duties? Provide examples of how this knowledge is used.

What special skills are required to perform your job duties? Provide examples of applicable skills.

Computer skills

Interpersonal skills

Written communication skills

Oral communication skills

Organizational skills

Research skills

Interpretative skills

Analytical skills

Other skills

What licensure, certification, or registration is required to perform your job duties? In what parts of your job duties is this required?

7. **Nature and purpose of contacts:**

To what extent is public contact involved in your position and what types of persons do you deal with (i.e., general public, other state agencies, local government, legislators, private businesses, deans, chancellors, etc.)?

What are the nature, purpose, and tone of these contacts?

To what extent does your position require interaction or coordination with other units in your department?

What are the nature, purpose, and tone of these contacts?

8. **Discretion and accountability:**

What methods, processes, and procedures do you use to get your work done?

How much instruction, advice, and counsel do you receive as you are completing your assignments?

Are you responsible for independently taking an action to approve or deny a request? Provide an example.

Provide an example of a problem that may arise in your office.

What types of problems would you resolve?

What types of problems would you take to your supervisor?

Do you have authority to act on your supervisor's behalf in his/her absence? Provide an example.

Do you function as a lead worker over others? If so, how many and what are their classifications? What types of assignments do you give these individuals?

Do you function as a supervisor or manager? If yes, describe the staff and work unit responsibilities.

9. **Surroundings and Hazards:**

Do you work outside the typical office setting? If yes, describe.

Do you work with any hazardous equipment or chemicals, or in hazardous situations? If yes, describe the circumstances.

Is there any other information about your position that we have not covered that may be of value for me to know?