

Columbus Consolidated Government Compensation and Classification Study: Implementation Review and Ongoing Administration



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Overview

- Evergreen Overview
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Who We Are

- **National Public Sector Consulting Experience**
 - Based in Tallahassee, FL
 - Work in 46 States
 - Extensive Experience with Cities and Counties
 - Over 1,600 Compensation and/or Classification Studies
 - Full-service Human Resources Consulting Practice
- **Human Resources Clients**
 - Local Governments
 - Colleges and Universities
 - School Districts
 - Quasi-Governmental Organizations
 - Non-Profits

Study Goals

- Review current compensation and classification systems to ensure internal alignment.
- Survey peer organizations to ensure external alignment.
- Produce recommendations to provide the organization with a compensation and classification system that is appropriately aligned, both internally and externally.



Employee Meetings

Positive Comments

- **Benefits** – The City's employees expressed that the benefits package played a positive role in affecting morale. Specific benefits mentioned were the time off, health care, and work-life balance.
- **Culture** – Several employees described the quality of people they work with and others mentioned the service-oriented mission of the City.
- **Schedule** – With a few exceptions, employees expressed their satisfaction with the hours worked, leading to a greater work-life balance.

Concerns

- **External Equity** – Employees expressed concerns with the external equity at the City compared to market peers.
- **Internal Equity** – There was lots of concern among employees about compression, specifically that employees weren't advancing steps and that was causing them to be paid the same amount as new hires when they have significantly more experience.
- **Workload** – Some employees referenced staffing levels, others said they were doing things not captured by their job descriptions.



Current System Findings

- **Strength:**

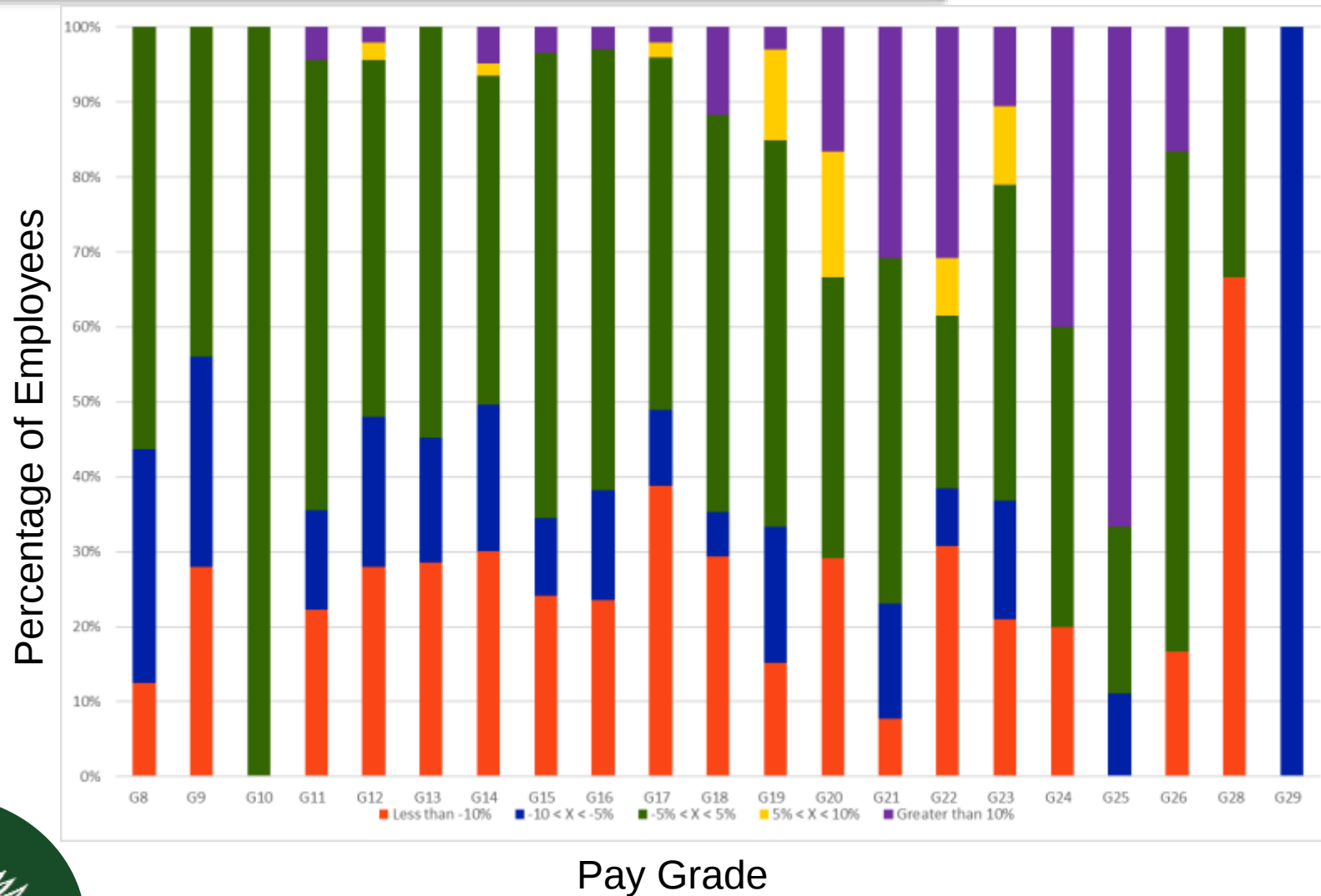
- The City possesses a simple and easy to understand pay structure.
- The City's pay plan has a high degree of consistency between grades.

- **Weakness:**

- The City has not advanced employees through their pay ranges at a rate consistent with expected progression.
- More than 80 percent of employees are below midpoint of their pay grade. More than 50 percent of employees are in Quartile 1 of their pay grade.
- There is compression between employees and supervisors and between highly-tenured employees and new hires.



Expected Pay Analysis



Market Targets

- Salary survey resulted in responses from nineteen peers.
- All responses are adjusted for cost-of-living differentials.
- More than 125 positions were benchmarked vs. the market, and the survey returned 7.0 matches per position.

Target Organization	Population	COLI	Per Capita Income
Columbus Consolidated Government, GA	206,922	93.77	\$26,097.00
Georgia Cities and Counties			
Albany, GA	69,647	89.41	\$20,313.00
Savannah, GA	147,780	95.80	\$25,664.00
Cobb County, GA	766,149	104.45	\$40,031.00
DeKalb County, GA	764,382	103.00	\$36,077.00
Forsyth County, GA	251,283	103.93	\$43,832.00
Fulton County, GA	1,066,710	112.87	\$47,163.00
Gwinnett County, GA	957,062	97.53	\$30,636.00
Hall County, GA	203,136	95.69	\$29,680.00
Henry County, GA	240,712	92.92	\$29,889.00
Athens-Clarke County, GA (Consolidated)	127,315	92.91	\$23,726.00
Augusta-Richmond County, GA (Consolidated)	202,081	90.54	\$22,709.00
Macon-Bibb County, GA (Consolidated)	157,346	92.64	\$25,640.00
Alabama Cities and Counties			
Auburn, AL	76,143	93.06	\$28,510.00
Phenix City, AL	38,816	91.45	\$23,397.00
Other			
Chattanooga, TN	181,099	95.88	\$30,592.00
Fayetteville, NC	208,564	93.58	\$24,823.00
Jacksonville, FL	949,611	103.32	\$30,064.00
Knoxville, TN	190,740	96.71	\$26,340.00
Muscogee County School District	-	93.77	-
Private Sector Databases	-	-	-



Market Results

Unadjusted Results (no cost-of-living adjustment)			Adjusted Results (cost-of-living adjusted)		
Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
-8.0%	-7.3%	-6.5%	-4.6%	-3.7%	-2.9%

- A negative differential indicates the City is behind at that market position on average.
- The results show the importance of cost-of-living adjustments when comparing to the market. The City is close to ten percent behind market when comparing at the minimum without an adjustment, but only half as far behind when adjusting for cost of living.



Key Recommendations

1. Adopt an adjusted pay plan with a reformatted step system. The newly recommended pay plan has consistent range spreads, consistent progression between grades, and 1.0% between steps.
2. Reassign pay grades to positions based on internal equity and the market results. Some positions will see larger adjustments than others due to the market response.
3. Place employees within their newly recommended pay grades. Select an implementation methodology that aligns with the compensation philosophy and financial means of the City.



Methodology Details

1. Zone based approach moves employees based on their time in classification. Zone 1 is 0-3 years in classification, Zone 2 is 3-6 years, etc. Employees in each zone are all moved to the same place in their new pay grade (e.g., employees in Zone 1 are near the minimum, Zone 2 employees are progressed slightly further, etc.).
No salaries are reduced as a result of this study.
2. Longevity based approach also moves employees based on time in classification. Employees receive a step for each year in rank and then are adjusted using the same zones as listed above. Going forward, Public Safety employees will receive an additional step at each longevity “milestone” (after years 3, 5, 7, 10, 15, 20, etc.).
No salaries are reduced as a result of this study.



Methodology Details Cont.

- Public Safety positions are being moved to pay ranges “above and beyond” projected market placement based on the significant recruitment and retention concerns as well as significant projected market movement. Salaries are detailed further on the next slide.
- Classifications requiring a CDL will also be moved above and beyond market to a starting rate of \$21.00/hour based on an internal equity scale placing certain positions (e.g., Bus Driver, Fleet Tech II, Motor Equipment Operator III, etc.) at a rate starting at \$21.00/hour. Other positions with CDL’s will move similarly with some coming in slightly below and some coming in slightly higher.
- **With the addition of the 25% cap, many of the CDL positions will have their increases capped at 25%**



Public Safety - Above and Beyond

- Recommended starting pay grade placement of the Police Officer, Sheriff Deputy, and Firefighter classification at \$45,000.
- Public Safety would continue to receive the OLOST supplement. Police Officer starting pay with supplement would start at \$50,121 and the other classifications would start at \$48,121.
- Pay Reform is factored into the new pay structure, so all employees would keep their current Pay Reform. There is a new Longevity adjustment for Public Safety employees going forward.

Recommended Classification	Recommended Grade	Recommended Minimum	Recommended Midpoint	Recommended Maximum
POLICE OFFICER	PS1	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 57,359.65	\$ 69,719.29
DPTY SHERIFF	PS1	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 57,359.65	\$ 69,719.29
FIREFIGHTER/ EMT	F1	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 57,359.65	\$ 69,719.29
CORRECTIONAL OFFICER	C1	\$ 42,500.00	\$ 54,173.00	\$ 65,846.00



Total Costs

Public Safety “Above and Beyond” & General Government costs (w/\$21 per hour for CDLs)

General Employees	Total Salary-Only Cost	Number of Employees Adjusted	Average Adjustment for Impacted Employees	% of Payroll
Parity-Zone	\$ 6,251,071.09	1180	\$ 5,297.52	13.6%
Public Safety	Total Salary-Only Cost	Number of Employees Adjusted	Average Adjustment for Impacted Employees	% of Payroll
Longevity-Zone	\$ 7,141,743.46	1028	\$ 6,947.22	15.5%
Combined Totals	\$ 13,392,814.55	\$ 2,208.00	\$ 6,122.37	14.5%



Employee Increases

Total Increases Above “X” Percent

Increase	#	%
0.0%	2207	100.0%
5.0%	1875	85.0%
10.0%	1475	66.8%
15.0%	1097	49.7%
20.0%	792	35.9%
25.0%	493	22.3%

Increases Between “X” and “Y” Percent

Increase	#	%
0-5%	332	15.0%
5-10%	400	18.1%
10-15%	378	17.1%
15-20%	305	13.8%
20-25%	299	13.5%
>25%	493	22.3%



CCG Changes – Post Study

Fiscal Year	COLA (For Classified FT Employees)
FY2024 (effective 07/01/2023)	1.0%
FY2025 (effective 07/01/2024)	2.0%
FY2026* (effective 01/01/2026)	3.0%
FY2027 (effective 07/01/2026)	2.0%
Total	8.0%

Fiscal Year	CPI Increase	ECI Increase
FY24	4.1%	4.8%
FY25	3.0%	4.8%
FY26	2.7%	4.0%
FY27	3.1%	3.5%
Totals	12.9%	17.1%

* Increased Minimum Starting Salary on GG & PS Pay Scales by 1%

- 2022 – Educational incentive for sworn employees
- 2022 – Career ladder for Official Court Reporters
- 2024 – Pay adjustment for sworn employees
- 2026 – Pay adjustment for MCP Sworn Officers



Ramifications

- With 8% COLA/step increases for employees, compression should be less prevalent. This is a major win compared to the last study.
- However, pay grade movement has been more limited. GG grades have moved by 1.0%. Public Safety has moved an average of 7.5%, but the wider market has likely moved by 12-20%.
- It is impossible to definitely assess your specific market without a study of your peers, but it is highly likely a market gap has been created as a result of pay movement by peers since implementation.



Best Practices

- Compensation should be evaluated 3 ways each year:
 1. Pay Ranges should be evaluated and moved, at least slightly, to avoid creating a market gap. Peers typically move pay ranges ~2.0% annually.
 2. Individual classifications should be evaluated for pay grade changes as needed. This should be done for roles experiencing high turnover, recruitment challenges, etc.
 3. Individual pay should be adjusted with a step increase annually. The goal is to grant an average of 1.5 steps per year to avoid compression building over time.
- Citywide evaluations should occur every 3-5 years. These can be done internally or with external assistance, but it is important to take a wider view periodically to assess internal/external alignment.



Thank you

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