

MEMORANDUM

State of Alaska
Department of Administration
Division of Personnel

To: Dianne Kiesel
Director

Date: May 19, 2006

Thru: Sarah Brinkley
Classification Studies Manager

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Subject: Demographer Study

Preamble:

The classification study of Economists, completed on December 16, 2003, combined the Labor Economist and Economist series. The State Demographer job class was created during that study to cover the position managing the State's population studies. There are two positions assisting the State Demographer, an Economist and a Research Analyst. Since 2003, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development has attempted to recruit and retain an employee in the Economist position with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the assigned demography work. The inability to do so indicates the Economist series is not appropriate for the work assigned. The Research Analyst series does not provide the required specialized knowledge and skills or cover the level of work assigned to the higher level position. The department submitted a request to create a Demographer/Statistician job class on December 22, 2005.

History:

The body of work being studied was previously grouped in the Research Analyst, Economist, or Labor Economist class series.

Scope:

This study covers a single position that serves as the principal assistant to the State Demographer.

Study Method:

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development provided a revised Position Description reflecting the scope and level of work assigned. The State Demographer provided information on the characteristics of demography, the duties of the position, and the needs of the agency. The work was analyzed for grouping into existing job classes and no appropriate classes were found. Since the work was not properly grouped into existing classes a new job class specification was drafted and provided to the department, classification analysts, and recruitment specialists for review and comment. The comments received were discussed with the agency's study

representative and final revisions to the class specification completed. The job class' internal alignment was analyzed and the preliminary results provided to the agency. The agency recommended assigning a higher range and provided comments and information in support of the request. The alignment was re-examined, the proper range determined, and the study completed.

Class Analysis:

Demography is the application of statistical theories, techniques, and methods to design, conduct, analyze, interpret, and report on the characteristics of human populations. Studies cover areas such as distribution, migration, fertility and mortality, as well as social and economic characteristics such as age, education, occupation, and health. Demographers analyze the causes and effects of population changes and attempt to explain and predict population processes by examining historical, economic, social, psychological, and environmental influences and their consequences.

The State's classification plan provides for grouping positions into job classes when they are sufficiently similar in duties and responsibilities, degree of supervision exercised and received, and entrance requirements that: the same title can be used to clearly identify 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; and employees in a particular class are considered an appropriate group for purposes of layoff and recall. Job classes are constructed as broadly as is practicable so long as the tests of similarity are met.

The Research Analyst series covers positions performing technical research and statistical evaluation of specific programs or processes. The general nature of the class requires a broad scope of knowledge and skills, which is reflected in the broad minimum qualifications. The specialized work of demography is not sufficiently similar to the general Research Analyst work for the same title to clearly identify the positions. Using the same minimum qualifications would not provide the level of knowledge or skill required for the demography duties and responsibilities. Grouping the demography work with Research Analysts would not provide an appropriate pool for purposes of layoff and recall.

The Economist series covers positions that apply specialized knowledge of economics to measure, interpret, and report on economic problems, phenomena, and relationships. The duties and responsibilities of Economists are similar to the demography work under review. The work in both areas includes planning and conducting studies with statistical analysis of information gathered and interpretation of data, and production of estimates or projections. The subject matter of studies also has some overlap. Economists consider population as one of the influences in economic studies and demographers consider economics as one of the influences in population studies. However, the differences in the scope and nature of the studies, the differences in level and scope of statistical analysis required, and the differences in methods and methodologies indicates using the same class title will not clearly identify the two specialties. The difference in the typical preparation for both occupations indicates grouping the demography work with Economists would not provide an appropriate pool for purposes of layoff and recall.

Other existing job classes responsible for designing and conducting studies involving statistical analysis and making forecasts or projections are in specialty areas with less similarity with the demography work, such as public health or biometrics. The work of demography is not sufficiently like the work described in existing job classes to meet all of the tests of similarity; therefore, a new job class is required for this body of work.

Class Title

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

Research found different organizations use different titles for positions performing professional work in demography. The most common titles found were Demographer, Statistician, or some combination of these two terms. Using Statistician for the class being created would not clearly convey the specialized nature of the work and could leave the class open to misuse as a general statistician class. Using the title Demographer conveys the kind and level of work performed. Since statistical knowledge and methods are integral to the work of demography it is not necessary to use additional terms to reflect them.

Minimum Qualifications

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

Education specific to demography is found at the graduate level, although there are very few colleges offering master's degrees or doctorates in the field. No colleges were found that currently offer an undergraduate degree in demography, but some colleges are working towards developing programs. To avoid the need to revise the minimum qualifications in the near future, the education requirement includes demography/population studies as one option. Other degree areas that include statistics and demography as an integral part of the education are included in the required qualifications to keep the potential pool of candidates as broad as practicable.

Establishing a minimum experience requirement will ensure the successful candidate can perform the work with the assigned level of independence and competence. Requiring the candidate have experience planning and conducting demographic studies would be equivalent to the work of the class and is not an appropriate minimum qualification. Setting a minimum experience requirement of two years of professional experience conducting studies that include demography as one area of consideration will ensure the candidate has the knowledge and skills required to learn to perform the required work during the probationary period, and should be broad enough to draw a reasonable pool of applicants.

Class Code

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

Demography requires knowledge and skill in the application of the theory, principles, and practices of demography and statistics. The Statistics and Research Analysis job family (P17XX) includes classes that administer, supervise, or perform research or work requiring the application of statistical theory. The Demographer job class is properly placed in the Statistics and Research Analysis job family. The class is assigned class code P1721.

Fair Labor Standards Act

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

The primary duty of an employee in the Demography job class is the performance of predominantly intellectual work. This intellectual work requires advanced knowledge in statistics, which is a recognized field of science or learning. The required knowledge is typically gained by post-secondary education at the baccalaureate level or higher. This indicates employees in the Demography job class would meet the primary duty criteria for the learned professional exemption from the FLSA.

Internal Alignment:

Salary ranges are determined based on internal consistency within the State's pay plans, in accordance with merit principles. The pay plans' goals are to provide fair and reasonable compensation for services rendered and to maintain the principle of like pay for like work. To evaluate internal consistency the difficulty, responsibility, knowledge, skills, and other characteristics of a job class are compared with job classes of a similar nature, kind, and level in the same job group and family or related job families.

Classes for internal alignment comparisons have been selected based on professional research and forecasting responsibilities; the requirement for specialized knowledge and skills; the nature of interaction with other agencies and organizations; and the influence of the work on State planning, policies, and programs. The classes found to have sufficient similarities for comparison purposes are: the Economist series, the Research Analyst series, the State Demographer class, the Criminal Justice Planner class, the Development Specialist series, the Equipment Operations Analyst class, the Planner series, the Transportation Planner series, the Health and Social Services Planner series, and the Biometrician series.

Classes at salary range 17 include Planner II, Health and Social Services Planner I, and Biometrician I. The distinguishing characteristics are the performance of professional research,

analysis, and investigation to provide data and background necessary for comprehensive planning. At this level employees work independently, with a minimum of direct supervision. Projects are of average difficulty and typically focus on a single area or a group with limited scope. Assistance is generally available for unusual or complex problems encountered.

Classes at salary range 18 include Equipment Operations Analyst, Research Analyst III, Economist II, and Development Specialist I. The distinguishing characteristics are the independent conduct of studies, surveys, and analyses. The methods of accomplishing assignments are left to the judgement of the incumbent, with the supervisor available for assistance. Studies are frequently of broad scope with social, economic, or political importance and impact.

Classes at salary range 19 include Planner III, Health and Social Services Planner II, and Biometrician II. The distinguishing characteristics are the responsibilities for the design of research projects, setting standards for technical adequacy, and coordinating contributions of other employees and outside agencies. Incumbents work with considerable independence under general guidelines on the more difficult and complex projects. Projects typically have significant impact on agency programs and State policies.

Classes at salary range 20 include Economist III, Development Specialist II, and Biometrician III. The distinguishing characteristics are the design, planning, and conduct of studies of broad scope and complexity. Assignments are typically controversial and have substantial impact on decisions affecting State programs or revenues. The work requires negotiation and conflict resolution to resolve diverse interests and incumbents commonly advocate for agency programs. Incumbents are typically either supervisors of professional staff or specialists responsible for policy review and technical expertise in a specialized technical area of research and management for a division.

Classes at salary range 21 include Research Analyst IV, Criminal Justice Planner, Transportation Planner I, Health and Social Services Planner III, and Biometrician IV. The distinguishing characteristics are the responsibility for planning, development, monitoring, and evaluating effectiveness of an agency program. Incumbents work with considerable independence in supervising major functions and typically have significant management responsibility.

The Demographer class is distinguished by responsibility for the design, analysis and interpretation of original research. Methods of accomplishing assignments are left to the judgment of the incumbent and assignments typically require adapting methods and processes to meet project goals. The incumbent is responsible for ensuring the technical adequacy of the work. Contacts with other agencies and organizations are typically to provide demographic information on Alaska's population, to receive demographic data, or to provide assistance with large studies that include Alaska, such as the federal census.

The Demographer's independence, required expertise, scope and breadth of studies, and impact on State programs and policies as well as the operations and planning of other public and private organizations, is greater than the characteristics of classes at ranges 17 and 18. Therefore, the Demographer class is properly assigned a range higher than 18.

The Demographer is not responsible for supervising professional staff, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the agency program, managing and controlling resources, or serving as the agency's expert for policy review. These responsibilities characterize the classes at ranges 21 and higher and are assigned to the State Demographer. Therefore, the Demographer class is properly assigned a range lower than 21.

To ensure proper alignment of the Demographer class the differences between classes at range 19 and 20 were carefully examined. Classes at both ranges have substantial responsibility for conducting large, difficult projects with considerable independence that require considerable analysis and developing reliable forecasts or projections. At both ranges incumbents have major responsibility for coordination and development of State planning and related functions or the work has a significant impact on State programs and other public and private organizations. The characteristics found at the higher range that are not found at the lower range include: assignments that are commonly controversial and deal with unprecedented issues; a requirement for considerable specialized knowledge outside the professional area, such as of a particular industry or scientific subject; and significant responsibility for advocating on behalf of a program or negotiating and implementing programs.

The information provided on the Demographer's duties and responsibilities does not indicate a level of controversy comparable to the classes at range 20 is common. The work also does not exhibit a comparable requirement for specialized knowledge outside of the area of demography. The Demographer's studies, forecasts, and projections are critical to management decisions for many State programs and revenues, but the Demographer does not recommend, plan, or implement the changes to programs and policies. The Demographer represents the State when working with federal and other agencies, but the work does not exhibit the type of negotiation, conflict resolution, or advocacy that is characteristic of the classes at range 20. The characteristics comparable to classes at the higher range are currently assigned to the State Demographer job class. The Demographer assumes the higher level of duties in the State Demographers absence, but the periodic assumption of higher level duties is properly addressed through contractual language covering acting status, not through internal alignment.

The characteristics of the Demographer job class indicate the class is properly aligned at salary range 19.

Conclusions:

The work of demography is not properly grouped into an existing job class. A new job class is required.

The new job class is titled Demographer. The class is placed in the Statistics and Research Analysis job family and assigned class code P1721. The class is assigned salary range 19.

The Demographer job class is established effective May 19, 2006.

Position Analysis:

PCN 071729 is in the Demographics Unit of the Research and Analysis Section and is supervised by PCN 071717, State Demographer. The position's primary duty is the production, analysis, and presentation of Alaska population information, estimates, and projections using appropriate statistical methods, models, and computer programs. This type and level of work distinguishes the Demographer job class.

PCN 071729 is allocated to Demographer effective May 19, 2006. The position remains in the General Government bargaining unit. A salaried employee in this position meets the criteria for exemption from the Fair Labor Standards Act as a learned professional and is not eligible for overtime.

Attachment:

Final class specification

cc: Guy Bell, Director
Division of Administrative Services
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Sharon Dick, Senior Management Consultant
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Employee Records