

R-26-21

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING UPDATED COMPENSATION PLAN GUIDELINES FOR ALL CLEAR CREEK COUNTY EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING THOSE OF ELECTED OFFICIALS, ESTABLISHING AN EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE (STAR PERFORMER) COMPENSATION POLICY, AND RESCINDING RESOLUTION R-25-08

WHEREAS, the Clear Creek County Board of County Commissioners (“Board”) has authority to establish and approve compensation policies applicable to County employees, including employees of elected officials; and

WHEREAS, the Board, on January 7, 2025, adopted Resolution R-25-08, a Resolution Adopting the 2024 Compensation Plan Guidelines for All County Employees, including those of Elected County Officials, and rescinding Resolution R-20-120; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes the importance of maintaining a clear, transparent, and internally consistent compensation framework that reflects operational realities, fiscal constraints, and workforce retention needs; and

WHEREAS, the Compensation Plan Guidelines previously referenced the potential use of traditional merit increases, which have not been consistently funded or implemented due to budgetary and operational considerations; and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to align the County’s written compensation policies with actual compensation practices by establishing a structured, discretionary alternative to traditional merit pay; and

WHEREAS, the Human Resources Director, in coordination with County leadership, has developed updated Compensation Plan Guidelines that include an Exceptional Performance (Star Performer) Compensation Policy to recognize sustained, extraordinary employee contributions and address retention risks when funding allows; and

WHEREAS, the updated Compensation Plan Guidelines maintain the County’s existing compensation philosophy, range structure, cost-of-living adjustment framework, and approval authorities, while clarifying how exceptional performance may be recognized in a fiscally responsible and equitable manner; and

WHEREAS, adoption of the updated Compensation Plan Guidelines does not create an entitlement to additional compensation and does not obligate the County to provide compensation adjustments in any given year; and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to adopt new guidelines for the 2024 Compensation Plan and to rescind the guidelines adopted by R-25-08 for the ongoing implementation of the job classification and compensation program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Clear Creek County Board of County Commissioners, that the updated Clear Creek County Compensation Plan Guidelines for All County Employees, Including Those of Elected Officials, attached hereto as Exhibit A, are hereby adopted.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the updated Compensation Plan Guidelines establish an Exceptional Performance (Star Performer) Compensation Policy as a discretionary, retention-focused alternative to traditional merit pay, subject to available funding and required approvals.

BE IT EVEN FURTHER RESOLVED, that these updated Compensation Plan Guidelines shall be effective as of February 17, 2026, and shall remain in full force and effect unless amended or rescinded by subsequent action of the Board of County Commissioners.

BE IT EVEN FURTHER RESOLVED, that Resolution R-25-08 is hereby rescinded effective as of the date of adoption of this Resolution.

ADOPTED this 17th day of February, 2026, at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Clear Creek County Board of County Commissioners.

Rebecca Lloyd, Chair

George Marlin, Commissioner

Jodie Hartman-Ball, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Deputy Clerk and Recorder
For Brenda L. Corbett
Clear Creek County Clerk and Recorder

The 2024 Compensation Plan Guidelines for all County Employees, including those of Elected County Officials, attached hereto as Exhibit A, are hereby accepted and approved:

Ron Thornton, County Sheriff

Brenda Corbett, County Clerk and Recorder

Chris Hegmann, County Coroner

Carol Lee, County Treasurer & Public Trustee

Donna Gee, County Assessor

Gary Fasel, County Surveyor

Exhibit A

Clear Creek County Compensation Plan Guidelines – Restated February 17, 2026

Purpose:

To establish guidelines for the ongoing maintenance of the job classification and compensation program.

Compensation Plan Guidelines:

Clear Creek County's (County) compensation philosophy is to maintain a competitive compensation program in order to attract, retain, and motivate qualified employees. The County provides employees with a total compensation package including base wage and a comprehensive range of benefits. We strive to pay competitively, within the constraints of the County's economic ability, considering governmental and private compensation in the Denver and Boulder metropolitan areas.

We value our employees. Our goal is to attract and retain respectful, competent, and results-oriented staff. The County aims for excellence in customer service and creativity in problem-solving. Therefore, we seek to provide opportunities for growth, skill development, and increased knowledge for our employees.

Funding and Operational Adjustments:

Funding Constraints

Eligible employees will be funded within the Compensation Plan based on the availability of funding and operational needs. Departments will prioritize essential positions, and funding allocations will be reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with organizational objectives.

Reduced Workweek Adjustment

Some employees who currently work a four-day, forty-hour workweek (four 10-hour days) may transition to a four-day, thirty-two-hour workweek with no reduction in pay. This adjustment may be implemented in lieu of fully funding compensation plan results in certain fiscal years and is intended to balance financial constraints with employee retention and operational needs.

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

Cost of living adjustments may be provided to support workforce equity, retention, and operational efficiency, subject to Board approval and available funding.

Methodology:

The salary ranges help us set a pay scale for each job in the County. Our salary range structure is targeted at 100% of the survey market value as of 2024. The midpoint of each salary grade is the

pay average for positions assigned to that range. The minimum and maximum represent the low and high pay limits of compensation for those positions.

County employees are paid for their individual skills and performance. Our ranges are consistent with the market value that other employers pay. The ranges will be reviewed periodically and adjusted to reflect labor market changes.

We do not assign specific placement of employee compensation within the range except for no less than the minimum. Therefore, employees can be paid at any point within the salary range.

In addition to the salary range structure, the Sheriff's Office has a Step Plan that covers two positions with a range of steps spanning a period of years. Each step represents another year of service to the County, and the seventh step represents the market average for that position. We do not assign a specific placement for employee compensation within the step plan, except that it must be no less than step one.

Applicability:

This applies to all County employees and to the employees of all Elected Officials.

Procedures

Responsibility for Administration: The Human Resources Director, supported by the Human Resources Specialist, County Manager, and Finance Director, is responsible for administering and monitoring the compensation plan. The County now utilizes Payfactors from Payscale for market benchmarking and compensation analysis, replacing the former reliance on seven government jurisdictions and the Employers Council. This software provides comprehensive data that will be used to evaluate positions and determine pay grades/ranges. The Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) retains final approval authority. It is important that any recommendations concerning position evaluation be prepared by individuals with direct knowledge about:

- The specific content and requirements of the position(s) being evaluated; and,
- The general content of other classifications within the County to ensure meaningful comparison.

Exempt and Non-exempt positions

The Fair Labor Standards Act determines whether an employee is exempt or non-exempt. The Human Resources Director will apply the Fair Labor Standards Act tests to classify positions as exempt or non-exempt.

The Performance Review Process

Performance reviews will be conducted annually on the employee's work anniversary date. These reviews are essential for determining merit-based pay increases. The review process ensures fair and transparent assessments of employee contributions and aligns with the county's compensation philosophy of rewarding performance.

Performance reviews do not automatically result in compensation adjustments.

Range Penetration and Compensation Strategy

Range penetration refers to the position of an employee's salary within their assigned pay range. Clear Creek County is committed to ensuring that employees are compensated fairly based on their experience, skills, and contributions to the organization.

- **New Hires:** The County will offer compensation that reflects the individual's experience and market value. Employees with significant experience will be offered starting salaries higher within the range, avoiding the automatic placement at the minimum of the range.
- **Current Employees:** Employees' salaries will be periodically reviewed to ensure that they are appropriately positioned within their pay range, considering their performance, tenure, and market conditions.
- **Range Adjustment:** The County will regularly review and adjust pay ranges to reflect market changes, ensuring that all employees are paid competitively and their salary remains appropriate relative to their peers within the same range.

Exceptional Performance (Star Performer) Compensation

Clear Creek County does not implement routine, annual merit pay increases tied to performance ratings. While traditional merit systems typically apply broadly and recur annually, Exceptional Performance (Star Performer) adjustments are intended to be rare, discretionary, and situational.

Although both traditional merit increases and Exceptional Performance adjustments may result in a base pay increase, Exceptional Performance adjustments are not part of an annual cycle, are not expected outcomes of satisfactory or strong performance, and are used only when an employee's sustained contribution significantly exceeds the normal expectations of the position and presents a retention or operational impact.

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to provide a structured, equitable alternative to traditional merit pay by allowing the County to recognize and retain employees who demonstrate sustained, exceptional performance that materially benefits County operations, service delivery, or organizational effectiveness.

This approach is designed to balance employee recognition, fiscal responsibility, internal equity, and the County's operational realities.

Scope

This section applies to all regular full-time and regular part-time County employees, including employees of Elected Officials, unless otherwise restricted by law, funding source, or operational necessity.

Policy Statement

Exceptional Performance Compensation Adjustments are discretionary compensation actions intended to recognize sustained performance that significantly exceeds the standard expectations of a position. These adjustments are not automatic, not awarded annually, and not guaranteed.

Nothing in this section creates contractual rights, entitlements, or expectations of additional compensation.

Eligibility Requirements

To be considered for an Exceptional Performance (Star Performer) Compensation Adjustment, an employee must meet all of the following baseline requirements:

1. The employee has no documented performance deficiencies or corrective actions within the preceding two (2) years.
2. The employee has a current performance evaluation on file demonstrating performance that meets or exceeds expectations.
3. The employee is actively employed at the time the recommendation is submitted.

Indicators of Exceptional Performance

In addition to meeting the baseline eligibility requirements, an employee must demonstrate at least four (4) of the following indicators. These indicators are evaluated collectively and holistically:

- Consistently produces work that exceeds established performance standards for the position.
- Assumes additional or complex responsibilities beyond those normally required by the job description.
- Provides skills, expertise, or institutional knowledge that are difficult to replace and essential to departmental or County operations.
- Makes significant contributions to projects, initiatives, or goals that enhance the County's effectiveness, efficiency, or service outcomes.
- Demonstrates sustained reliability and accountability during periods of operational strain, staffing shortages, emergencies, or high workload demand.
- Is identified as a significant retention risk due to external employment opportunities, where loss of the employee would materially impact operations.
- Has a demonstrated history of long-term service marked by consistent professionalism, institutional knowledge, and high-value contribution.

Forms of Exceptional Performance Compensation

Subject to available funding and required approvals, Exceptional Performance recognition may be provided in one of the following forms:

A. Base Pay Adjustment

A permanent increase to the employee's base rate of pay, generally ranging from three percent (3%) to ten percent (10%), provided the resulting rate remains within the employee's assigned salary range or approved compensation structure. Base pay adjustments are intended for limited circumstances in which a permanent adjustment is justified by the nature of the role, labor market conditions, or significant retention risk, and in which a one-time bonus would not adequately address the operational impact of losing the employee.

B. One-Time Performance Bonus

A one-time bonus payment ranging from \$500 to \$3,000, which does not adjust the employee's base rate of pay.

An employee may not receive both a base pay adjustment and a one-time bonus for the same Exceptional Performance determination.

Limitations And Conditions

- Exceptional Performance adjustments are not automatic, not recurring, and not guaranteed.
- An employee may not receive an Exceptional Performance (Star Performer) Compensation Adjustment in consecutive years, unless approved by Human Resources. Repeated awards for the same individual should be rare and supported by clearly documented, sustained exceptional contributions that are distinct from prior awards, and reviewed by Human Resources for equity and consistency.
- Exceptional Performance adjustments are not intended to replace cost-of-living adjustments or address routine market or equity concerns.
- No adjustment shall be approved if it results in inequitable pay outcomes without documented justification and Human Resources review.
- Exceptional Performance adjustments do not replace the annual performance review process and may not be used as a substitute for routine performance management.
- Availability of funding for Exceptional Performance adjustments is determined through the annual budget process and Board-approved appropriations. Approval of this policy does not guarantee funding in any given year.
- Awards are subject to budget availability and may be limited or suspended during periods of fiscal constraint.

Review And Approval Process

1. A supervisor or Elected Official may submit a written recommendation describing:
 - How baseline eligibility requirements are met; and
 - How at least four (4) Exceptional Performance indicators are satisfied.
2. Human Resources will review all recommendations for consistency, equity, and policy compliance.

3. Recommendations must be reviewed by the County Manager or elected official prior to final determination.
4. Final approval is subject to applicable budget authority and available appropriations.

Administration

The Human Resources Director is responsible for administering this section, maintaining documentation, monitoring equity impacts, and ensuring consistent application across departments. The Board of County Commissioners retains final authority over compensation policy and funding decisions.

No Entitlement Created

This section does not create a right to compensation, a promise of future adjustment, or a change to the at-will employment relationship. The County reserves the right to amend, suspend, or rescind this section at any time through Board action.

Source

This section replaces the prior internal Star Performer Criteria document and establishes a formal compensation framework.

Sheriff's Office Step Increase Process

The Sheriff's Office employees in the Step Plan will receive a performance review and a step increase on their anniversary date each year, provided they have not reached the top step of the Step Plan. Upon notification from the division Captain verifying the performance evaluation was satisfactory, a step increase will be initiated for that employee on their anniversary date. Without an annual review, no step increase will be given. Employees whose evaluations do not meet expectations are not eligible for a step increase (although they may be re-evaluated at an appropriate later time and may be considered eligible if they then meet or partially meet expectations).

If an employee in the Step Plan has achieved the top step, that employee may be eligible for cost of living adjustment/market adjustment increases at the same time and in like manner as given to employees covered by the Salary Grade/Range Structure (applicable to all employees other than the employees in the positions within the Step Plan).

No step increases will be granted except in accordance with budgeted appropriations.

Compression Issues

After an adjustment of the Salary Grade/Range Structure has occurred, some long-term employees may experience compression. This means that their wage will be the same or less than that of a recently hired individual. HR and the Supervisor will address each compression case on an as-needed basis, reviewing the individual's years of service and performance records. No compression issue increase will be granted except in accordance with budgeted appropriations.

COLA - Cost of Living Adjustment

Cost of living adjustment or COLA may be given to employees within the salary grade/range structure. COLA will adjust their pay but does not affect the salary grade/range piece. For the step plan, the COLA will adjust the entire step plan by the amount given on the whole (e.g., 3% will adjust every step from 1 through 7 by 3%).

Hiring

Vacant positions will be posted at the minimum with a range up to the midpoint. Positions within the step plan will be posted as steps one through three. Advertising for more than midpoint or step three must have the County Manager's or Elected Official's approval.

New Hire Starting Rates of Pay

New hire starting rates will be determined based on the new hire's relevant experience, skills, and market conditions rather than defaulting to the minimum of the assigned salary grade. Hiring managers have the authority to offer starting compensation up to 10% above the minimum of the salary range. Offers exceeding this amount require approval from the County Manager or the relevant Elected Official. This approach ensures that experienced candidates are compensated appropriately for their expertise, aligning with the County's strategy for range penetration. For example, a candidate with significant experience in the role would not be started at the bottom of the range but rather at a point within the range that reflects their expertise and market value.

Offers of Employment

Offers of employment must be in writing and presented to the Human Resources Director for review before they can be made to a candidate.

Promotion

A promotion occurs when an individual is transferred or reassigned to a job in a higher pay grade/step than his or her existing pay grade/step. An employee will be given the minimum wage/salary for the new position or the next step, which provides an increase in wage for the employee up to 10% (to be determined by the hiring department) of his or her previous salary, whichever is greater. Promotions take into consideration:

- The individual's qualifications to perform the new job and his or her relevant experience;
- The rate of pay, qualifications, and experience levels of any other employees assigned to the same job classification;
- The percentage differential between the existing and new pay scales;
- Employees receiving a promotion are usually compensated at the minimum of the new salary grade or the new position's step one, effective upon the employee's assumptions of his/her job duties; and,

- Any increase of more than 10% or more than step one must have the approval of the County Manager or Elected Official.

Demotion

A demotion occurs when an individual is transferred or reassigned to a job in a lower pay grade or a position with lower pay steps. A demotion can be initiated for a variety of reasons (e.g. employee preference, reorganization). Reduction in pay may occur when an employee is demoted.

Employees who are transferred to a lower position due to a reorganization and are above the maximum for the new position may be grandfathered at their old pay rate for up to 4 months from the date of transfer. Thereafter, their pay should be reduced to a rate within the new pay grade/range or new step/range, based on a review by the HR Director.

Part-time/Full-time Status Changes

When an employee moves from part-time to full-time or full-time to part-time status within the same job classification, the job/status description and associated minimum pay rate will take effect immediately. Adjustments to the starting pay rate may be made at the supervisor's discretion with prior approval from Human Resources.

Adding New Jobs to the Compensation Structure: New jobs develop over time based on various factors such as technology, organizational goals, demand for new services, etc. Our process for assigning the additional job based on new programs/services to a salary grade/range or a step/range is as follows:

- Preparation of a Vacancy Evaluation or Redesign of Position to document a clear business case to justify the request, including how the budget impact (if any) will be managed;
- Preparation of a Job Analysis Questionnaire or updated job description by the requesting Department Head/Elected Official;
- Send the job data to Human Resources for review and feedback;
- Follow-up questions may be needed for clarification about the duties, qualifications, and why the need for the addition of this position exists;
- A meeting to review the vacancy or redesign of the position must occur with the County Manager (or appropriate Elected Official), County Finance Director, and Human Resources Director; and,
- Upon approval to move forward with the position, Human Resources will initially complete an evaluation of the degree of change and collection of survey market data.

Reclassification Procedures

Changes regularly occur in job content and the evolution of a function. These may result because of technology, organizational goals, demand for new services, etc. We anticipate employees' positions will be given more responsibilities or added duties as part of working for the County. Only substantial job content changes are considered for a reclassification. The process for determining the degree of change within a position job based on revisions of programs/services is as follows:

- Preparation of a Vacancy Evaluation or Redesign of Position to document a clear business case to justify the request, including how the budget impact (if any) will be managed;
- Preparation of a Job Analysis Questionnaire or updated job description by the requesting Department Head/Elected Official;
- Send the job data to Human Resources for review and feedback;
- Follow-up questions may be needed for clarification about the duties, qualifications, and why the need for the job change exists;
- A meeting to review the vacancy or redesign of the position must occur with the County Manager (or appropriate Elected Official), County Finance Director, and Human Resources Director;
- Upon approval to move forward with the position, an evaluation of the degree of change and collection of survey market will be completed by Human Resources;
- Reclassification to a higher grade will result in the incumbent(s) being compensated at the same rate or no less than the minimum of the new range; and,
- Reclassification to a lower grade may result in a pay reduction.

Actions that Human Resources must review

Human Resources must review the following compensation actions:

- Exempt/non-exempt classification;
- Promotional increases, to confirm that it conforms to these guidelines;
- Employment offers (written or verbal);
- Title changes, reclassifications, and new jobs/positions to comply with these guidelines; and,
- Discipline involving demotions to confirm that it conforms to these guidelines.

Actions that must be approved by the County Manager or Elected Official

The County Manager or Elected Official must approve the following compensation action:

- New employees proposed to be hired above the salary range minimum plus 10% or higher than step three; and,
- Special forms of compensation (i.e. on call).

Definitions:

- Demotion: A transfer to a position in a lower salary grade.
- Elected Official: Refers to the person elected to the position of Assessor, Clerk & Recorder, Sheriff, Coroner, and Treasurer.
- Exempt Employee: Exempt from the Fair Labor Standard ACT (FLSA) requirements to pay overtime.
- Hourly Employee: Subject to the overtime requirements of the FLSA and paid on an hourly basis. Hourly employees must be paid overtime for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours, except certain personnel in the Sheriff's office. Their rules currently are anything over 80/hours in a two-week period.
- Position Evaluation: The process of ranking a position in relation to other positions according to its internal importance to the organization.
- Lateral Transfer: A transfer to a different position within the same or similar salary grade or range
- Maximum: The salary range maximum. Generally, all employees holding positions within a grade should be paid at or below the maximum range maximum.
- Midpoint: The middle of a salary range. The midpoint represents market pay for the average, fully competent employee in a position assigned to that range. Employees are paid above or below the midpoint based on their own performance, work history, experience, and other factors.
- Minimum: The minimum of a salary grade. Generally, all employees who hold positions within a grade should be paid at or above the minimum.
- New Job: This job has unique duties that are unlike any current position description within the county.
- Non-exempt: Subject to the overtime requirements of the FLSA. Non-exempt employees are paid overtime for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours per week. (Again, with the exception of certain Sheriff's Office employees - See Hourly Employee).
- Promotion: Transfer to a position with a higher salary grade or a position with higher paid steps.
- Promotional increase: Pay increase due to a promotion to a position in a higher salary grade/range or step/range.
- Reclassification: Assignments of a position to a new salary grade or re-evaluating a group of positions. Typically, it does not include a pay adjustment.
- Review Date: Is the hire date or promotion date
- Salary Range: The salary range shows the permissible pay range for the positions assigned to that grade. At Clear Creek County, salary ranges are based on market survey data.

- Salary Structure: A group of salary grades with ranges.
- Step Plan: Is a pay structure that allows moving through the range by a consistent increase due to entitlement concept up to the maximum of the step plan. After reaching the maximum, increases are based on market adjustments.