Policy Title: Compensation Plan Policy		
Number: 008	Effective Date: 11/17/2025	Revision Date: 10/06/2025

Purpose

This policy applies to all Burke County employees. It defines the development process and uses of the "Compensation Plan" of Burke County.

General Statement

The Compensation Plan is to provide consistent, equitable, and work-related bases for administering employees' compensation in a way that best serves the citizens and employees of Burke County. The Compensation Plan stipulates the pay policies as approved by the Board of County Commissioners. The Compensation Plan in conjunction with the Classification Plan guide the County in providing equitable compensation for all positions.

Guidelines

Administration and Maintenance

The County Manager may delegate the responsibility for the administration and maintenance of the compensation plan to the Human Resources Director. The Compensation Plan includes the "Pay Plan" which consists of a minimum, midpoint, and maximum rate for each job classification. The Pay Plan is intended to provide equitable compensation for all positions when considered in relation to each other, reflecting differences in duties and responsibilities, the comparable rates of pay for positions in public and private employment in North Carolina, changes in the cost of living, the financial conditions of Burke County, and other factors. The Human Resources Director shall, from time to time, with the permission of the County Manager or his/her designee, make comparative studies of all factors affecting the level of salary ranges and shall recommend to the County Manager such changes in salary ranges as appear to be warranted. All employees covered by the Compensation Plan shall be paid at a rate listed within the pay range established for the respective position classification, except for employees in trainee status or employees whose existing pay rates are above the established maximum rate following adjustments to the Pay Plan. Employees being paid at a rate above the maximum rate established for their respective classes shall remain at their present pay rate as long as the maximum rate is equal to or below the employees' present pay rate. The actual compensation paid to any employee shall be determined by the County Manager or his/her designee in accordance with the relevant provisions of this personnel policy.

Burke County will conduct salary surveys as the County Manager or his/her designee may deem necessary for the entire organization or for those departments or specific classes of jobs as may be appropriate. Such salary surveys will use as comparators for compensation purposes those public and private organizations that it believes are most similar to it in size and purpose. These comparators will typically include: (1) the City of Morganton located within Burke County; (2) those North Carolina counties that are most similar to it and/or are located in the immediate geographical area; and, (3) other private and public organizations as determined to be appropriate. The North Carolina counties used typically include the counties of Caldwell, Catawba,

Cleveland, Henderson, Lincoln, McDowell, Nash, Rowan and Rutherford. These resources are also used in cross reference to the classification plans of those entities and of Burke County to ensure their relevance to market conditions.

Adjustments to the compensation plan.

a. *Adjustments of compensation.* The County Manager or his/her designee may from time to time adjust compensation of county employees to ensure that such compensation remains competitive, to the extent possible.

b) *Cost-of-living adjustments.* Cost-of-living adjustments, when granted by the board of commissioners, will be provided to all eligible county employees. Eligible county employees ~~are any employees~~ who are in positions listed on the pay plan, and who are below their grade range maximum rate, will receive the approved cost-of-living increase as a percentage add to base compensation. In lieu of receiving the Cost-of-living base compensation increase or county-wide approved increase, employees at or above grade range maximum, and full-time eligible employees in positions not listed on the pay plan, will receive a lump sum payout comparable to the Cost-of-living or increase amount.

Rates of compensation pay.

Rates of compensation are based on qualifications that pertain to the requirements of each position, internal equity, recruitment difficulties, conditions of the labor market, budget constraints, and/or the employee's unique skills. No applicant for employment or employee shall be deprived of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affected as an employee because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, political affiliation, disability, marital status or age.

a) *Trainee rates.* Employees in trainee status will remain in a training job grade for the position until the appointing Department Head and the Human Resources Director determine that the trainee is qualified to assume the full responsibilities of the position, subject to approval by the County Manager or his/her designee.

b) *Interim appointment rates.* An interim appointment occurs when an employee is selected to temporarily perform some or all the duties and responsibilities of a vacant position with the expectation that the person will hold the position for at least thirty (30) calendar days. Interim appointments typically apply only for Department Head positions. Interim appointments must be reviewed and approved by the County Manager or his/her designee.

The employee's compensation will typically be increased by ten (10) percent for the period of time in any interim appointment. After the interim appointment has been completed, the employee will typically return to her/his original position at the previous compensation.

c) *Part-time employees.* Part-time employees will be hired at the minimum rate of compensation of the position into which the employee was hired with limited exceptions based on experience and market demand. Exceptions will have to be approved by the County Manager or his/her designee.

d) *Differentials and Stipends*. From time to time there exist unique situations that may require additional

compensation to employees who provide specific service that is above and beyond the normal requirements of the position they are in (for example SWAT Team, language skills). These services may be rendered for a specific period of time or on an on-going "as needed" basis. Such situations will be recommended by department heads for consideration, based on the needs of the department to the County Manager or his/her designee for review. Compensation may be addressed by way of differential or stipend to an individual employee, or class of employees, and paid in such manner as the County Manager or his/her designee may determine appropriate for the situation. .

Compensation when a position change occurs.

Position changes may affect an employee's compensation rate. The degree of change, if any, depends upon the type of position change. All position changes and pay adjustments are subject to approval of the County Manager or his/her designee. Pay adjustments in general will occur at the time of the position change.

a) *New hire/appointment.* Newly hired employees will generally be paid at the minimum of the compensation range for the classification of the position into which the employee has been hired, except those employees with trainee/work against status. Employees may be paid above that rate if education/experience, internal equity, department turnover, conditions of the labor market, or recruiting challenges warrant higher compensation in the discretion of the County Manager or his/her designee.
Appointments above the hiring rate may be made with the approval of the County Manager or his/her designee when deemed necessary in the best interest of the County. The County Manager or his/her designee may authorize a starting pay up to midpoint of the salary range without any further notification to the Board of Commissioners. The County Manager or his/her designee may also authorize starting pay above the midpoint of the salary range, but in such cases the County Manager or his/her designee must notify the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners within one (1) week after doing so.

New hire pay for part-time or temporary status will be paid at an hourly rate within the established range.

b) *Promotion.* Employees may be promoted in appropriate circumstances. The terms and conditions of all promotions must be approved in advance by the County Manager or his/her designee. A promoted full-time employee's annual compensation will typically be increased (a) by six (6) percent of his or her current compensation or (b) to the "compensation range minimum" set forth in the then-prevailing pay plan that corresponds with the position to which he or she has been promoted, whichever is greater. Higher promotional increases may be approved by the County Manager or his/her designee based on the requirements of the new position, internal equity, recruitment difficulties, or the unique or unusual skills of the promoted employee. A promoted part-time employee's pay rate will be increased to minimum hourly rate set forth in the then-prevailing Pay Plan that corresponds with the position to which he or she has been promoted to. Nothing herein shall be construed as creating a property right in employment.

c) *Reclassification/ Initial Classification.* Classification is the process of evaluating a position for substantial and long-term changes in the assigned duties and responsibilities. See Classification Plan Policy for a description of this process.

When an employee occupies a position that is evaluated, and the position moves to a higher pay grade, then the employee's compensation will increase by at least six (6) percent or to the minimum compensation of the higher pay grade, whichever is greater. Higher increases in compensation for reclassification may be approved by the County Manager or his/her designee based on the requirements of the new position, the amount of the grade movement, and internal equity.

d) *Lateral transfer.* A lateral transfer occurs when an employee moves into another position at the same grade level. Employees' pay will be evaluated by the County Manager or his/her designee when making a lateral transfer. Lateral transfers must be reviewed and approved by the County Manager or his/her designee.

e) *Demotions.* Employees may be demoted in appropriate circumstances. The terms and conditions of all demotions must be approved in advance by the County Manager or his/her designee. A demoted employee's annual compensation will be evaluated and addressed by the County Manager or his/her designee at the time of demotion based on, for example, the reason for the demotion, the number of pay plan grades by which the employee's position is being demoted, or internal equity issues.

f) *Amendment of compensation prescribed by pay scale.* If the county elects to amend the pay scale, then the rates at which employees are compensated may be adjusted accordingly.

g) *Career Ladder.* Some job classifications have objective, measurable, specific criteria which separate them from jobs in the same job series, but do not necessarily take them into a higher pay grade or different classification. These advancements are made by natural progression, pay and job title will be adjusted upon completion of the requirement(s) as listed in the position description, trainee classification specifications or career ladder plan as adopted.

h) Suspensions. The limited and temporary extent to which suspensions, paid or unpaid, disciplinary or administrative, affect compensation are explained in the Disciplinary Practices Policy in the Burke County Personnel Policies.