

UNDERSTANDING PAY SYSTEMS

Objectives of Pay Systems

All organizations have common management needs and employee expectations that must be translated into pay practices. An effective pay system should address both the needs of the organization and the expectations of its employees.



Basic Pay System Elements

Job Families

A job family includes jobs that share common characteristics and are grouped into a common pay structure. These characteristics include the type of work performed, the competitive job market, potential career paths for employees, and state and federal laws regulating wages and salaries. Separate pay range structures typically are built for each job family.

Pay Grades

Compensable job factors such as skill, effort, and responsibility serve as the basis for assigning jobs to different pay levels to achieve internal pay equity among employees. The greater the degree of skill, effort, and responsibility required by a job, the higher the level of pay. Jobs that have similar value and are grouped into the same range of pay are assigned or classified to pay grades.

Job Pricing

While objective job evaluation and classification contributes to internal pay equity, job pricing contributes to external pay equity. Job pricing uses data collected from salary and wage surveys of other employers to determine the external market value of benchmark jobs. This data is used to set pay ranges that are competitive with the external job market. Because jobs have been analyzed and classified into groups of similar value, job pricing does not require a survey match for each unique job.

Job Market

Job markets may be different for different employee groups. By definition, a job market represents the employers that a district typically competes with to attract and retain employees. Professional employees may be recruited from a larger geographic area than paraprofessional or auxiliary employees. School districts may be the only competitors for instructional positions while other types of businesses may be competitors for business or technology jobs. For this reason, different job markets and survey sources may be used to accurately assess the district's true competitive job market.

Pay Structure

The pay structure itself is the key management tool that provides control over the district's competitive position in the marketplace and internal pay equity among all employees. Designing the pay structure involves setting the proper control points (midpoint, minimum, and maximum rates of pay) for each pay grade and ensuring that appropriate pay differentials between pay grade levels are established.

Issues that must be weighed and balanced in the design of pay structures include:

- positioning the district competitively,
- impact on current pay practices,
- adequate pay differentials for higher levels of job responsibility,
- internal consistency and rationality, and
- controlled variance within each pay range.