

Management Leadership Service (MLS) Q&A

Important Information

This booklet provides general guidance for employees, supervisors, and managers concerning the Management Leadership Service. It is not intended to change or otherwise modify any law or regulation that may impact the subject matter of this booklet. In the event that there is an inconsistency, the law or regulation will prevail. Please also bear in mind that laws, regulations, and procedures may be amended at any time.

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General Information

Q. What is the Management Leadership Service (MLS)?

A. MLS is the County's program for employees occupying certain high-level merit system positions. MLS employees have responsibility for managing County programs and services, or developing and promoting public policy for major programs and management functions, or both. Major components of the MLS program include a broadband classification system, performance accountability with performance-based pay, professional development opportunities, and a County-wide focus in program and policy development.

Q. What's the purpose of MLS?

A. MLS has six (6) objectives.

- Performance accountability: to foster improvement in the performance (e.g. efficiency, effectiveness, and service quality) of managers, departments, and the County through the consistent application of goal-setting and performance measurement. Compensation adjustments are based on performance, providing recognition for outstanding performance and appropriate, constructive remedies for poor performance.
- Job satisfaction: to increase job satisfaction while maintaining pay satisfaction.
- County-wide perspective: to ensure that managers maintain a County-wide focus and identity (including increased communication and collaboration) when considering policy alternatives for their programs.
- Management and leadership skills: to ensure that managers have essential leadership skills, through self-awareness of their current strengths and development needs, and acquisition of state-of-the-art leadership skills through training and other learning opportunities.
- Attraction and retention: to attract and retain a highly competent, diverse group of managers
- Flexibility in job assignment: through a flexible classification system, to allow senior management to quickly reassign MLS managers to respond to the needs of the County and its residents and to provide managers with the opportunity to change assignments for the purpose of skill development, job enrichment, and professional growth.

Q. What positions are included in MLS?

A. MLS includes most executive branch management and policy-making positions previously classified at Grade 27 and above.

Notable exceptions are appointed, non-merit department/office directors and highly-skilled or specialized professional positions, such as attorneys and physicians.

Management-level uniformed public safety officials participate in the professional development opportunities offered to MLS employees but are not part of MLS.

For a legislative branch position that meets the MLS requirements, the County Council determines whether the position will be included in MLS.

Q. What are the advantages of MLS for a management-level employee or an employee who aspires to be a manager?

A. Some of the benefits are:

- Professional development and networking opportunities through participation in the Leadership Institute and other formal education programs.
- Personalized 360 degree assessment of management/leadership skills to identify individual developmental needs.
- Greater flexibility in work assignments and opportunity for mobility and advancement within the organization.
- Improved performance planning and performance recognition.
- Opportunity for increased compensation based on successful performance.
- Recognition as a member of the County-wide professional management “team”.

Classification Structure

Q. What is the MLS classification structure?

A. The MLS classification and compensation system is different and separate from the classification system used for other County merit system positions. MLS consists of three broad occupational classes of duties and responsibilities. Each of these classes has a generic class specification defining the class by scope, complexity of work, and delegated authority. Each class is assigned to its own pay band, or broad salary range, on the MLS salary schedule. Advancement through the pay band is based on performance rather than on length of service.

Q. What is the advantage of having broad classes instead of classes specific to each job?

A. The broad classes allow flexibility and mobility in job assignments with little likelihood of an employee working “out of class.”

Q. What are the general characteristics of the classes?

A. **Manager I** (pay band M1) and **Manager II** (pay band M2) have responsibility for developing and promoting public policy for major programs and management functions that are:

- Directly related to the broad mission of the County government;
- In direct support of the County Executive, Chief Administrative Officer, or another elected or appointed official.

Manager III (pay band M3) positions include all of the following:

- Directing the work of an organizational unit or a department, such as a division, section, or team.
- Supervising at least two full-time employees, or the equivalent of two full-time employees.
- Assuming responsibility for the success of one or more significant County programs, functions or services.
- Influencing County policy in the assigned area.

Q. What are the minimum qualifications for MLS positions?

A. Entry into the management career path at the Manager III level requires five (5) years of progressively responsible professional experience in organizational management or in a field related to the assigned area, as well as graduation from an accredited college or university with a Bachelor’s Degree and certain knowledge, skills, and abilities. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be substituted. More specific information is available in the class specification for Manager III.

Q. How are new positions assigned to an MLS class/pay band? Is QES used?

A. When a new position meets the management and policy responsibilities at an MLS level, QES is used only to determine a position’s threshold eligibility for MLS. Once the position is determined to meet or exceed a Grade 27 threshold using QES, the position is assigned to an MLS class and pay band based on “whole job analysis”, a classification methodology that looks at the whole job to determine a position’s best fit into the MLS classification structure. The class specification for each band describes the scope, complexity, and delegated level of authority for the class.

Q. What about position titles?

A. MLS positions are referred to formally as Manager I, Manager II, or Manager III, depending on the assigned pay band. However, each position may use whatever working title is most appropriate, as determined by the department.

Q. Does each individual MLS position have a position description?

A. Each position has a position summary that identifies the particular major duties and responsibilities and any specific technical or program expertise required for that position.

Q. Can an MLS position be reclassified?

A. Yes, reclassification of a position to a different band within MLS is possible if duties change significantly. However, normal movement from one band to another is through competitive promotion. Because of the broad scope of each MLS band, the necessity for reclassification is rare.

Q. If an MLS position is reclassified from one pay band to another within MLS, or if an MLS employee is transferred to another position in the same pay band, is there any increase in salary?

A. The salary of an MLS employee whose position is reclassified to a higher pay band is not increased, except that an employee's salary must be at least the minimum for the new pay band. An employee transferred to another position within the same pay band does not receive a salary increase.

MLS Training and Development

Q. What are the components and objectives of MLS training and development?

A. The opportunity for training and professional development offered to MLS employees is one of the most important features of MLS. Its purpose is to provide senior County leaders the opportunity to enhance their leadership skills and to increase their effectiveness and ability to adapt to organizational change through both individual and group learning activities.

It is the County's view that in today's diverse and demanding work environment, the successful manager is one who not only knows the business of the organization, but is also a coach, facilitator, and motivator of staff. The successful manager has vision, a system-wide perspective, and a clear focus on both internal and external customers, all of which contribute to effective management and efficient delivery of services to the community.

Training addresses both individual professional development and organizational competencies. Major objectives are to:

- Assess individual leadership strengths and development needs;
- Develop individual and organizational capabilities.
- Establish networks to promote information-sharing, cooperation, and problem-solving across departmental lines.
- Enhance leadership skills that apply in all County departments.

Q. What does the training and development program consist of?

A. Key features include:

- Participation in the Leadership Institute, which consist of a series of seven (7) training modules on topics such as leadership concepts and team building, communications, values and ethics, systems thinking and strategic planning, problem-solving and decision-making, unleashing the energy of change, and the high performing organization.
- Use of a multi-feedback leadership assessment instrument for planning individual personal and professional development.
- Advanced management/leadership seminars and programs led by political and community leaders to expand understanding of the County as a whole.
- The Leadership Experiential Program, which offers opportunities for short-term experiential assignments in other departments to enhance leadership competencies and facilitate the movement of employees across departmental lines.

Performance Management Process

Q. What is the MLS performance accountability system and how does it work?

A. A key feature of MLS is performance-based pay. The MLS WPM system offers a systematic way for work planning and performance review to take place collaboratively between MLS participants and supervisors and for performance accountability results to be linked to compensation and other important personnel actions.

General objectives are:

- Focusing on outcomes and results, following an established process.
- Recognizing differences in performance.
- Linking performance and pay to recognize and reward excellence and provide an incentive for performance improvement.

Q. What are some key features of the MLS WPM?

A. Some of the special features are:

- Establishment of a plan, which includes professional development goal, within the first 45 days of the new review period.
- Required narrative comments for all ratings.
- Optional feedback from relevant participants.
- Optional individual performance goals.

Q. How often are performance reviews conducted?

A. Formal performance reviews are conducted at the end of the fiscal year rather than at an employee's anniversary or former increment date. Performance expectations will normally relate to an employee's annual work plan, organizational outcomes, County

priorities, and core management competencies. Department Directors are responsible for ensuring that MLS members under their supervision have an annual performance plan and for conducting the appraisal.

Q. Do I have any input into my performance plan?

A. Yes, you and your supervisor develop and review the plan at the beginning of each fiscal year. The plan will identify:

- Outcome-aligned objectives and performance success criteria.
- Job-related behaviors and competencies (skills, knowledge, and behavior).
- Personal and professional development goals.

Q. What are the performance rating categories?

A. There are five (5) rating categories. A supervisor must evaluate and assign a rating to each performance and expectation individually and must then assign an overall rating to the employee's performance. The rating categories are:

- Exceptional performance (Performance at this level is rare)
- Highly successful performance
- Successful performance
- Below expectations
- Does not meet expectations

Q. Are performance evaluations retained?

A. Performance evaluations are kept in the employee's official personnel file in OHR for five (5) years. Performance evaluations and supporting documentation may also be kept in a department's operating file for five (5) years.

Q. What are performance evaluations used for?

A. The overall performance rating impacts pay. (See next section on Compensation) Supervisors are also encouraged to consider performance ratings when making decisions on such personnel actions as merit system status, promotion, performance awards, reduction in force, work assignment, training, termination, demotion, or other adverse actions to resolve performance problems.

Q. May an employee appeal a performance rating?

A. An employee may not grieve a performance rating unless the employee received the lowest overall performance rating *and* the supervisor who rated the employee failed to follow established procedures. Please see *Personnel Regulations*, Section 11, *Performance Planning and Evaluation*, for more information.

Workforce Performance Management (WPM) System

Q. Is a particular system used for performance management?

A. The County, through its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System, utilized an Oracle-based, integrated Workforce Performance Management (WPM) System that will allow the Performance Management process to be started and completed electronically between supervisors and employees.

Compensation

Q. Is there a separate salary schedule for MLS?

A. Yes, MLS has its own salary schedule consisting of three “pay bands” or Grades – M1, M2, and M3. Each of the pay bands has a broad salary range with a minimum, maximum, midpoint (halfway between minimum and maximum), and control point (90th percentile of the salary range).

Q. Does this salary schedule ever change?

A. Yes, the salary ranges are reviewed and adjusted periodically, based on such factors as labor market pay rates, economic indicators, and the County’s ability to pay.

Performance-based Pay

Q. How does MLS performance-based pay work?

A. Performance-based pay means that, with the exception of some nominal cash awards that you might be eligible for, all pay increases or pay awards are based on your annual performance rating. Each July, based on the previous fiscal year’s performance, MLS employees may be eligible for one or more of the following:

- A general wage adjustment
- A variable adjustment (increase) to base salary
- A lump sum payment
- A combination of base increase and a lump sum

Q. What about the annual service increments and general wage adjustments I have been receiving?

A. Performance-based pay replaces automatic across-the-board service increments. An MLS employee receives general wage adjustments unless the employee’s overall performance rating was *Does Not Meet Expectations*.

Q. Is a probationary employee eligible for performance-based pay?

A. A new probationary employee with less than six (6) months of service is not eligible for performance-based pay. However, a probationary employee not eligible for performance-based pay is eligible for a general wage adjustment.

Q. What are the performance-based pay guidelines?

A. An employee with a rating of “successful performance”, “highly successful performance”, or “exceptional performance” is eligible to receive performance-based pay as indicated in the chart on page 13.

Q. Who approves the performance-based pay?

A. A department Director recommends the award amount for each MLS employee in the department. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) reviews each recommended award and makes the final decisions for MLS employees in the executive branch. The CAO’s approval of MLS awards is subject to the availability of funds and their appropriation by the County Council.

OHR and the CAO monitor the distribution of MLS performance-based pay. Each year OHR reports on the distribution to the Council.

Q. What happens if my supervisor doesn’t complete my performance appraisal by the end of the fiscal year?

A. No performance-based pay can be awarded without a completed performance appraisal.

Q. Is all performance-based pay awarded at the same time?

A. Yes, all MLS performance appraisals must be completed before the end of the fiscal year and all pay awards or salary adjustments are effective at the beginning of the following fiscal year. Your anniversary date and former increment date have nothing to do with pay adjustments under the performance-based compensation system.

Other Compensation

Q. Can MLS employees earn overtime or other special compensation such as shift differential, stand-by pay, etc.?

A. MLS participants are not eligible for special compensation, such as compensatory time, overtime, shift differential, call-back pay, stand-by pay, holiday premium pay, or emergency pay. However, an MLS employee is eligible to earn multilingual pay if the department Director has certified that the employee’s position requires the use of another language and the employee has been certified as proficient in the language required.

Leave

Q. Do MLS employees earn annual and sick leave?

A. MLS employees in the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) accrue annual and sick leave on the same basis as other unrepresented employees. These MLS employees may carry over a maximum of 320 hours of annual leave from one leave year to the next.

Note: A former State/County employee with a maximum carryover of 400 hours of leave retains the 400 hour maximum.

Q. What about MLS employees who are not in the ERS?

A. MLS employees in the Retirement Savings Plan (RSP) or the Guaranteed Retirement Income Plan (GRIP) (generally, employees hired on or after October 1, 1994) do not earn annual or sick leave. Instead, these employees are granted paid time off (PTO). PTO may be used for any purpose and is requested and approved like other leave.

Full-time employees are credited with 140 hours of PTO at the beginning of the leave year and another 140 hours of PTO in July of each year. A part-time employee is credited with a pro-rated share of hours based upon the employee's percentage of time worked. At the end of each six-month leave period, the amount of PTO credited to a part-time employee will be adjusted up or down based on the number of actual hours paid during the leave period.

Q. Is there a maximum carryover limit for PTO?

A. There is no limit to the number of PTO hours that may be carried over from one leave year to the next.

Q. Are PTO hours paid if an employee separates from County service?

A. On separation from the County, an employee will receive payment for PTO hours which may be a combination of accumulated PTO hours carried over from prior years and a prorated portion of the PTO hours granted for the final year of employment. However, the maximum combined number of PTO hours that may be paid is 600.

Q. Are MLS employees eligible for personal leave days?

A. Like other unrepresented employees, MLS employees are granted three (3) personal leave days at the beginning of the leave year.

Transfer

Q. May I transfer to another MLS position?

A. Yes, you're encouraged to request or apply for a transfer to another (vacant) MLS position at the same Grade/band level to broaden your knowledge and experience. MLS participants and departments may also agree to a temporary assignment or temporary or permanent exchange of MLS participants within the same pay band.

Q. Can I be transferred by my department Director or the CAO?

A. You can be transferred from one MLS position to another in the same pay band by your department Director or the CAO if your skills and abilities are needed elsewhere in the organization.

Q. If I transfer to another position, what happens to my salary?

A. If you transfer to another MLS position in the same Grade/pay band, you'll retain your current salary.

Accounting for Time

Q. What is the normal workweek for an MLS employee?

A. An MLS employee is expected to work the hours required to complete assigned work, but not less than 80 hours per pay period, or the regularly scheduled number of hours in a part-time employee's pay period. If an MLS employee works more than half of the regularly scheduled work day, the employee's supervisor may grant administrative leave to the employee for the remainder of the work day.

A department Director may grant administrative leave for more than half of a regularly scheduled work day to an MLS employee who has worked an unusually large number of hours in the same or any previous pay period.

Q. Do MLS employees fill out time sheets?

A. Yes, a full-time MLS employee is required to account for 80 hours in the pay period and a part-time employee must account for the employee's regularly scheduled hours in the pay period. You must complete timecards and record both hours worked and the leave taken (annual, sick, PTO, personal days) whenever you are absent. Administrative leave granted by the employee's supervisor or department Director should also be recorded on the timecard.

Remember, MLS employees are not eligible for compensatory time or any special compensation (except for multilingual pay, if applicable).

Other Conditions of Employment

Q. As an MLS employee, what are my merit system rights?

A. MLS participants who have completed the probationary period and attained merit system status have those merit system rights specified by the County Code and *Personnel Regulations* for merit system employees.

Q. What is the probationary period for MLS positions?

A. Like other unrepresented employees, employees entering MLS from outside the County government must serve a 12-month probationary period before attaining merit system status. The probationary period may be extended beyond the 12-month period with the approval of the CAO.

Employees who have merit system status and are later promoted or reclassified to MLS positions retain their merit system status. An employee promoted to an MLS position or to a higher level MLS position serves a six-month promotional probationary period.

Q. What is the salary increase if I am competitively promoted from one pay band to a higher pay band?

A. MLS salary increases on promotion are the same as for other merit system employees. An MLS participant promoted to a higher pay band is entitled to at least a 5% increase in base salary. The salary following promotion may not be less than the minimum or more than the maximum salary of the new pay band.

Q. Are there any differences in treatment of MLS employees with respect to adverse actions?

A. No, current regulations on disciplinary and adverse actions apply to MLS participants as well as other unrepresented merit system County employees.

Q. How does Reduction-in Force (RIF) work for MLS participants?

A. RIF for MLS follows the RIF procedure in effect for unrepresented employees. For more information about RIF, please refer to *Personnel Regulations*, Section 30.

| Eligibility for Performance-Based Pay for MLS Employees* | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Overall performance rating: | If employee's salary is below 90 percent of pay band | If employee's salary is at or above 90 percent of pay band | If employee's salary is at top of pay band |
| Exceptional Performance | Employee is eligible for an addition to base salary and lump-sum award. The total of the addition to base salary and lump-sum award must not exceed 6 percent of base salary. | Employee is eligible for an addition to base salary and lump-sum award. The total of the addition to base salary and lump-sum award must not exceed 4 percent of base salary. | Employee is eligible for a lump-sum award not to exceed 4 percent of base salary. |
| Highly Successful Performance | Employee is eligible for an addition to base salary and lump-sum award. The total of the addition to base salary and lump-sum award must not exceed 4 percent of base salary. | Employee is eligible for an addition to base salary and lump-sum award. The total of the addition to base salary and lump-sum award must not exceed 3.5 percent of base salary. | Employee is eligible for a lump-sum award not to exceed 3.5 percent of base salary. |
| Successful Performance | Employee is eligible for an addition to base salary and lump-sum award. The total of the addition to base salary and lump-sum award must not exceed 3.5 percent of base salary. | Employee is eligible for a lump-sum award not to exceed 2 percent of base salary. | Employee is eligible for a lump-sum award not to exceed 2 percent of base salary. |
| Below Expectations | Employee is not eligible for performance-based pay. | Employee is not eligible for performance-based pay. | Employee is not eligible for performance-based pay. |
| Does Not Meet Expectations | Employee is not eligible for performance-based pay. | Employee is not eligible for performance-based pay. | Employee is not eligible for performance-based pay. |
| * An MLS employee receives the general wage adjustment granted to other non-bargaining unit employees unless the employee's overall performance rating was <i>Does Not Meet Expectations</i> . | | | |