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Getting on track: Consolidating and streamlining positions at Clark County

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GETTING ON TRACK:
Consolidating and Streamlining Positions at
Clark County

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Kevin Cerny
Craig Christiansen
Elizabeth Muto

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** 2
**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT** 3
**BACKGROUND** 5
**OVERALL EVALUATION GOALS** 9
**METHODOLOGY** 11
**COMPARATIVE RESEARCH AND FINDINGS** 17
**INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS** 30
**RECOMMENDATIONS** 33
**SOURCES** 41
**APPENDIX** 42

a) Clark County Human Resources Organization Chart
b) Clark County Historical Population Table (1910–2000)
c) Sample Survey
d) Administrative Support/Clerical Series List
e) Administrative Support/Clerical Schedule List
f) Administrative Track – Condensed Job Descriptions
g) Financial Track – Condensed Job Descriptions
h) Legal Track – Condensed Job Descriptions
i) Executive Assistant Track – Condensed Job Descriptions
j) Broadbanding Trends in the States Table
k) State Data
l) Multnomah County (OR) Data
m) San Diego County (CA) Data
n) City of Henderson (NV) Data
o) City of Las Vegas (NV) Data
p) City of Phoenix (AZ) Data
q) Employee-to-Class Values
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For more than a decade, Clark County, Nevada was the fastest growing county in the nation and its government (and government services) rapidly expanded in an attempt to keep pace with the ever-increasing needs of County residents. In 1996, Clark County Human Resources (CCHR) endeavored to improve its managerial efficiency by reducing its number of position classifications and succeeded in collapsing some 1100 job classes down to 500. As the population boom continued well into the new millennium, the County was operating largely from a reactive position and experienced yet another spike in classifications; this time reaching 765 job classes for 7911 County employees. Jesse Hoskins, the new director of CCHR, entered into a partnership with the UNLV MPA program to explore options on how to effectively reduce position classifications. Looking to create a possible template that later could be applied to other Clark County job families, the UNLV MPA Team was tasked with evaluating the County’s most populous job family - Administrative Support/Clerical - that comprises 20% of the County’s total workforce and spans all units. A wide range of comparative research was conducted on target jurisdictions at the federal, state, and local levels, after which the findings were compiled and analyzed. The Team also reviewed and assessed all 32 of the unique job classes in the Administrative Support/Clerical job family to determine how they might best be condensed. The Team’s primary recommendation to CCHR is to implement a Track Continuum System - or something similar - to streamline its position classifications. This system would allow for a 78% class reduction in the Administrative Support/Clerical job family; down from 32 to 7 job designations along four tracks (Administrative, Financial, Legal, and Executive Assistant). The proposed change to CCHR’s current classification system would promote increased internal managerial efficiency and greater organizational flexibility.
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To fulfill the Spring 2009 final analytical paper/thesis requirement of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Master's of Public Administration (UNLV MPA) program, four teams of graduate students were assigned to work with various local public agencies on projects that would put their academic knowledge into practical application. The intended result of these partnerships was to give the UNLV MPA teams ‘real world’ experience while providing the participating agencies with detailed evaluations of, and recommendations on, key aspects of their existing programs. This evaluation project, GETTING ON TRACK: Consolidating and Streamlining Positions at Clark County, was conducted by team #4 (Team): Elaina Bhattacharyya, Kevin Cerny, Craig Christiansen, and Elizabeth Muto - in partnership with members of the Clark County, Nevada Human Resources Department (CCHR/Client).

The purpose of this report is to convey the Team's findings from its research on position classifications within Clark County as well as from a number of other target jurisdictions that were analyzed in order to compare different classification practices. In consultation with the Client, the Team decided to focus its analysis strictly on the Administrative Support/Clerical job family, paying particular attention to the structure and organizational efficiency of the aforementioned job family. From data collection and review of agency practices to interpretation and conclusions, the Team sought to create a cogent

10 REASONS MANAGERS HATE POSITION CLASSIFICATION

Position classification often...
1. Creates narrow, rigid boundaries between jobs
2. Locks employees into functional silos
3.Accentuates hierarchy
4. Demands centralization and uniformity
5. Limits ability to offer competitive salaries
6. Assumes individuals' contribution to their job is static and never grows
7. Encourages playing havoc with merit promotion process
8. Fails to keep up with changing technology
9. Impedes employee development
10. Creates conflict between managers and the classifiers who must "police" classification decisions

evaluative report. Based on the Team’s findings, this report aims to offer the Client clear, concise recommendations on potential adjustments to Clark County’s current classification process for the improvement of internal position management efficiency.

Three primary considerations informed and guided the Team’s approach to this evaluation project:

1) Is there room for improvement in how CCHR manages position classifications for its nearly 8000 full-time employees? Is CCHR able to reengineer and/or restructure its position classification/compensation function into a more effective and efficient process?

2) What is the most appropriate method(s) for reducing the total number of position classifications in the Administrative Support/Clerical job family? Could this later serve as a template for position classification reductions in other Clark County job families?

3) Are there any existing classification practices/systems that Clark County should consider implementing? Given the current economic conditions, what other options may be of use or benefit to Clark County at this time?
BACKGROUND

According to the U.S. Census, Clark County, Nevada is the 15th largest county in the United States and was the fastest growing county in the nationwide for most of the past decade. Established in 1909 when the population was roughly 3000 inhabitants, the region has seen meteoric, unprecedented growth. The population explosion that increased the number of Clark County residents by 600% - making it home to approximately 1.8 million people today - brought with it both a slew of opportunities as well as challenges for Southern Nevada to manage. As a result, the actual management structure of Clark County expanded significantly along with the population. After the Clark County School District, the Clark County Government is the second largest employer in the region with a current permanent/full-time staff of 7911 employees in 42 departments. That figure includes employees at the Clark County Government Center, McCarran International Airport, Clark County Fire Department, the Building Department, and various other units. In addition, Clark County currently employs 2353 part-time workers for a broad spectrum of duties such as Parks and Recreation program coordinators, County election assistants, reserve fire fighters, specially-trained airport inspectors, etc.

The operation of Clark County is a vast, complex, multifaceted, and dynamic endeavor. Successful management of Clark County is of vital importance not only to those who reside within its jurisdiction, but also to the well-being of the entire State of Nevada. Ensuring the optimal allocation of the County’s finite resources and manpower is a tremendous and critical responsibility, particularly in this period of a severe nationwide economic downturn and with Nevada among the states hardest hit. Every unit within Clark County has been tasked with paring down to a leaner, more streamlined operation and finding ways to do more with less while, hopefully, maintaining – though sometimes needing to
augment – the services the public has come to expect. The CCHR Department is no exception. At this time, the County is hiring for "essential positions only" and some 300 positions are sitting dormant; additionally, buyouts are being offered to a number of current employees. Many non-essential positions will be left open for an indeterminate period for future review and consideration, while some positions have been eliminated outright. With so much at stake and the high level of scrutiny the public sector is facing, CCHR is on the front lines and being proactive about running a tighter ship. As Clark County, along with the rest of the state and country, waits out this disquieting employment lull, the forward-thinkers in CCHR are looking at how to use this time to make meaningful improvements to the way they conduct the business of the public sector.

Director Jesse Hoskins came to CCHR less than two years ago with an impressive and extensive background in public personnel management. Having held key HR posts in the Government Accountability Office in D.C., the City of Baltimore, the City of Chicago, and as an active board member for the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA HR), Hoskins is well-equipped to handle the challenges at Clark County and has moved quickly and decisively during his short tenure in CCHR. Members of his staff that the Team had the opportunity to meet and work with include Timothy Nye, Senior Human Resource Analyst (16 years at CCHR); Jocelyn Marquez, Human Resource Analyst (less than 2 years at CCHR); Andy Spurlock, Classification and Compensation Analyst (13 years at CCHR); and Diane Koksha, Employment Manager (11 years at CCHR).
The camaraderie among the CCHR team is palpable and the blend of longtime and newer employees seems conducive to finding innovative solutions by applying both 'tried and true' and novel approaches to the tasks before them. They are primed to take CCHR in a bold, new direction and actively are seeking information - both qualitative and quantitative data - that can be adopted and/or modified from other places to serve the specific needs of Clark County. Moreover, CCHR has been incredibly receptive to and generous in their support of the UNLV MPA program’s involvement in their operation during this time of transition and heartily welcomed this public-academic partnership. Since the Team’s initial meeting with the Client in November 2008, the focus of this project has shifted from that of a program evaluation to more of a process evaluation. After conferring with the Client over a series of conversations, e-mails, and meetings, it became clear that CCHR wanted to gain a fresh perspective and gather recommendations on how best to streamline its rather unwieldy system - and number – of position classifications.
Early in 1996, CCHR took steps to reduce its number of position classifications and got it down from about 1100 to 500 which had been deemed to be in proportion for the size of Clark County operations and manageable for CCHR to properly oversee. However, over the past decade, that number has crept up again and CCHR is now charged with the oversight of a cumbersome 765 unique position classifications, 73 of which (10%) are non-management classifications with only one employee to a class. Various factors have contributed to the position/classification ‘explosion’ of recent years: Clark County’s population boom and the resulting demand for new/increased services, need for specially-trained personnel to keep up with technological advances, natural ‘class creep’ that tends to occur in the civil service, transfer of several functions from State-level to County-level management (e.g. Air Quality and Environmental Management), and the hiring of specific personnel in response to post-9/11 federal mandates. Regardless of the reasons for the proliferation – “justified” or not – members of CCHR have identified position classification reduction among their top priorities and have engaged the services of the Team to assist them in moving toward that goal.

According to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management...

Position classification is a process through which jobs (i.e. positions) are assigned to a pay system, series, title, and grade or band, based on consistent application of position classification standards. This ‘sorting out’ and recording of like duties and responsibilities provides a basis for managing essential personnel management functions, such as those for recruiting, placing, compensating, training, reassigning, promoting, and separating employees.
OVERALL EVALUATION GOALS

Of the 765 active position classifications at Clark County, 32 of them are Administrative Support/Clerical-related; this grouping is referred to as a ‘job family.’ According to CCHR records, Administrative Support/Clerical is the largest and most widely-spread job family, comprised of 1570 permanent employees (20% of the county’s 7911-person workforce) who work in every unit of Clark County operations. Upon a cursory review of the current list of position classifications for Administrative Support/Clerical, there are 10 classifications with 0 to 5 employees to a class. The Client has entrusted the Team with scrutinizing and analyzing each position classification that falls under the Administrative Support/Clerical umbrella. The goal of this aspect of the evaluation is to determine which, if any, of the existing position classifications are candidates for potential merger or reclassification, thereby allowing for the collapse of multiple classifications into a single classification. In the event that a position reclassification is determined to be a viable option for the Client, revisions in the compensation scale also may need to be addressed. Through this process of evaluation, Director Hoskins and his staff are looking to assess potential benefits for Clark County with regard to the way that employment positions are defined, managed, and rewarded. It is hoped that this evaluation process and the resulting recommendations will provide a functional template that then can be applied to other job families and, ultimately, serve as a model as Clark County works to streamline all
of its position classifications across the board. Increased internal efficiency at the County equates to increased external savings for taxpayers in resources and labor costs; a sound investment, indeed.

POSITION CLASSIFICATION... HELP OR HINDRANCE?

Since position classification programs were implemented as part of the civil service reform movement, they were in large measure designed to be control devices even though they are frequently rationalized as being management tools. For example, it has long been thought that the classification process could aid in revealing organizational defects; yet upon closer observation it becomes obvious that it is frequently the classification system itself that creates these defects. As control devices, position classifications are doubly unsuccessful. First, they prevent program managers from having the discretion essential for the optimum success of their mission. Second, they generate an astounding amount of dysfunctional activity whose sole purpose is to get around the control devices.

METHODOLOGY

To evaluate CCHR's position classifications in the Administrative Support/Clerical job family, the Team has established and employed four efficiency measurements:

1) Employee-to-Class Value - a generally accepted and applied measurement/ratio used to calculate an organization's internal efficiency

2) Analysis of Job Descriptions and Responsibilities - used to compare and evaluate the duties of different positions/classes

3) Client Interviews - used to gather detailed internal information regarding the needs and nuances of the organization

4) Determination of Best Practices - search and evaluation of target jurisdictions in order to identify industry standards and/or industry leaders with regard to internal efficiency.

Employee-to-Class Value

The Employee-to-Class Value (ECV) is an arithmetically manageable measurement, which can yield very relevant data on an organization's internal efficiency. ECV calculates the total number of employees within a particular job class or classes divided by the number of classes being measured. The result is a value that shows overall how many employees are working in the same position. The perception tends to be that the more employees there are within a given job class, the greater the probability and opportunity for organizational efficiency. For example, having one job class with a total of 60 employees is considered favorable (i.e. 'better'/more efficient) and preferable to having four job classes of 15 employees each. The 60-employee job class arguably gains the benefit of economies of scale. There is a general belief that a human resources department would increase its efficiency and effectiveness by only having to manage (i.e. recruit, train, evaluate, reward,
etc.) employees of a single job class as opposed employees of four smaller, distinct job classes.

Clark County’s 7911 employees are spread out across 765 unique job classes. Within the Administrative Support/Clerical job family, there are 32 job classes comprised of 1570 employees in total. Dividing 1570 employees by 32 job classes yields a value of 49. That is to say that, on average, there are 49 employees per job class within the Administrative Support/Clerical job family at Clark County, Nevada. The ECV is not meant to be a ‘stand alone’ measurement of an organization’s efficiency. However, when used in conjunction with other types of measurements, the ECV can provide excellent data. The ECV also is useful and easily applied for the comparisons with governmental agencies. In this study, the ECV was used as a baseline for the assessment of comparable target jurisdictions. Through discussions with the Client and independent research, the Team identified several local government organizations to consider in relation to Clark County. The following local-level jurisdictions were selected for comparison because of prior general knowledge of them, their size, and their geographic location: Maricopa County (AZ), Multnomah County (OR), County of San Diego (CA), City of Henderson (NV), City of Las Vegas (NV), City of North Las Vegas (NV), City of Phoenix (AZ), and City of San Diego (CA).

The Team prepared a brief survey for the purposes of gathering the requisite data from the target jurisdictions. The survey asked the target jurisdictions to report the total number of employees in their Administrative Support/Clerical (AC) job family, as well as the titles/numbers of their various AC job classes and how many employees they have in each job class. For background information and to ensure measurability, the survey also asked respondents for the total number of employees and the total number of job classes in their organizations. The survey was sent to the target jurisdictions via e-mail and then the Team made follow-up phone calls. Early in the research process, it became evident that individual
telephone interviews were absolutely essential to procure the necessary employee data, gain an understanding of the target jurisdictions' past history with reclassification, and compile information on possible best practices.

Ensuring appropriate and accurate collection of employee data from the target jurisdictions called for more than the simple, straightforward compiling of survey responses. First and foremost, to preclude an 'apples to oranges' comparison, the Team had to evaluate individual job classes at the target jurisdictions to determine which of them rightfully should be classified as AC. After determinations were made as to which job classes were AC, data requests were resubmitted to elicit correct data sets from the target jurisdictions. Most jurisdictions returned a completed Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet with the titles of their AC positions. As individual line items, respondents input the number of employees for each job class. The Team then used those figures to generate the Employee-to-Class Value (ECV) for each participating jurisdiction. The comparison data collected is included in the appendix of this report, along with a copy of initial survey used.

In addition to local-level data, the Team opted to utilize meta-analysis in its review of state-level data as well. In 1996, the State of South Carolina executed a comprehensive study on Employee-to-Class Value (referred to as the Employee/Class Ratio in their report). The South Carolina study, through its use of surveys, compiled Employee-to-Class Values from 36 states. These values subsequently were used by the State of South Carolina to significantly reform its job classification structure. Relevant data from the South Carolina study has been reviewed and adopted for comparison purposes in the Team’s evaluation of CCHR.

Federal-level data also was collected and analyzed in the course of this study. While the Team did determine that local-level data has the most direct connection and correlation to the CCHR/Client scenario, it is agreed that the inclusion of federal-level data comparisons provides additional insights into the universality of the ECV measurement. With that in mind,
the Department of Defense (DoD), Federal Government, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) were surveyed and analyzed.

**Evaluation of Job Descriptions and Responsibilities at Clark County**

To gain a clear understanding of the Administrative Support/Clerical job classes at Clark County, the Team reviewed all 32 of the AC job classes that were created by CCHR and are posted on the County’s website for easy public access. The job classes were evaluated by two exclusive considerations: Minimum Qualifications and Examples of Duties.

**Minimum Qualifications** - There are several facets to Minimum Qualifications. First, there is the level of education required for the positions being evaluated. Education level varied from “equivalent to graduation from high school” to “equivalent to an Associate’s Degree, and/or specific coursework in business, public administration or a related field. Beyond the basic educational requirements, specific skills were identified as possible parameters for differentiating job classes. In particular, minimum skills in both: 1) financial processes and transactions, and 2) legal terminology, and legal processes, were considered to be noteworthy position identifiers. From these characteristics, jobs were broken into separate, distinct groups. No target number of jobs to a group was set; decisions were made by Team consensus on what constituted reasonable, rational groupings of like jobs. After the positions were separated according to the above characteristics, they were further evaluated by the second exclusive consideration, Examples of Duties.

**Examples of Duties** - Examples of Duties within the AC job family run the gamut of a wide and comprehensive array of administrative tasks. The specifications for and intricacies of each position are evident in the numerous, detailed duties for which an AC employee is responsible. The Team elected to evaluate positions by what were determined to be skills, rather than by specific duties. Skills were placed into one of three categories: Organization, Communication, or Minor Skill. This allowed for coding of the 32 job classes by varying
levels of the aforementioned three categories. Thus, all 32 position classifications were separated three times. The first separation was made by educational requirements. The second separation involved specific legal-, financial-, or executive assistant-related skills. The third separation resulted from a cumulative rating of the Examples of Duties that ranked requisite levels of organizational skills, communication skills, and minor skill sets.

After the position/class titles were separated, the Team discussed and organized each of job classes within the AC job family. From its deliberations, the Team unanimously came away with the strong impression that several of the jobs had very similar skill requirements. Although the Team was careful in respecting the intricacies of each position during the separation process, the skills for a good number of positions still appeared to noticeably overlap with other previously separated positions.

Client Interviews

The Team was fortunate to have open lines of communication with and ready access to CCHR/Client. This included having the opportunity to meet with the Client in-person on several occasions. These meetings were highly informative as the Team was able to ask questions, float ideas, and receive feedback directly from the Client as the evaluation project concept crystallized. While the primary task at hand was to evaluate the Administrative Support/Clerical job family, the topic reclassification led to genuine, in-depth discussions with the Client regarding the current CCHR position classification system. These discussions proved to be invaluable as the Team garnered a tremendous amount of knowledge on the subject in general - and CCHR in particular - from having a truly involved, engaged, and interested Client willing to share their insights and expertise. As such, it is appropriate to
count Client Interviews among the standards of measurement in this study because the Client openly shared the shortcomings of their current system. In formulating the evaluation process, the Team took into consideration the Client accounts of where they themselves, experts in the field of classification/compensation, can see room for improvement. This project was a meaningful partnership and, as a result, the Team’s recommendations to CCHR are very much tailored and customized to their needs.

**Best Practices**

Beyond the straight collection and evaluation of the aforementioned data, the Team also sought to learn about and compile ‘best practices’ that could be beneficial to CCHR. For the purposes of this classification study, ‘best practices’ were defined as organizational structures and processes that allow for optimal efficiency and flexibility within that public agency. Best practices often can be researched and revealed through a comprehensive literature review. In this case, however, the Team had the unique opportunity to discuss various employee classification systems with survey respondents in many of the target comparison jurisdictions. Human Resources personnel in most of jurisdictions surveyed were not only amenable but also eager to assist in the Team’s efforts to learn about efficient classification systems. For the most part, target jurisdictions provided timely and relevant information in response to our requests for information. The public sector is not immune to the current economic downturn and many government offices are functioning with fewer staff members than ever before. Respondents who had explored the possibility of implementing position reclassifications within their own jurisdictions were

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**KEY PRINCIPLES OF CLASSIFICATION AND COMPENSATION SYSTEMS**

- Aligned with the mission of the organization
- Aligned with the strategic plan
- Competitive posture
- Simplicity
- Pay aligned with contributions
- Encouragement of creative non-monetary reward system
- Open, communicated system of compensation
- Clear/transparent procedures
- Recognition of the value of people

Source: Eastern Michigan University
- http://www.emich.edu/public/hr/broadbandinfo.html
especially generous in sharing their thoughts and suggestions. The Team greatly appreciates
the time and care that representatives of various governmental agencies took to thoughtfully
discuss this project.

As previously mentioned, research also was conducted on several state and federal
agencies where classification and compensation modification efforts have been made, are in
the process of being implemented, or actively are being considered. These initiatives include
pay for performance, conventional merit pay systems, true classification systems (usually
federal agencies), broadbanding, cash bonus compensation systems, or any combination of
these systems.

COMPARATIVE RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

This section is a compilation of the comparative research that was conducted along
with the Team’s findings from the target jurisdictions. Presented in order from the macro- to
micro-level view, the section has been organized into three parts: Federal Findings, State
Findings, and Local Findings (i.e. County and City).

FEDERAL FINDINGS:

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT (OPM)

Most federal agencies rely on the protocols of the Office of Personnel Management
(OPM) as a foundation for their job classification systems. Some agencies look to the OPM
as their sole source of human resource management protocols, while others implement additional and/or alternative systems to be more adaptive and responsive to their individual needs. However, all federal agencies are required to follow the general practice of the OPM’s classification system, in order to keep job classifications broad and applicable to a greater population of the workforce, thus operating in a manageable, effective and efficient manner.

**Federal Classification System**

For the most part, the Federal Government implements a true classification system. While there is room for flexibility within agencies’ structures, their format must comply with the strict classification standards set forth by the OPM. This is an effective and manageable system that will not likely become overwhelming or unwieldy because of the strict requirement to classify employees into series and positions that already exist, rather than creating new titles and classes for each new position that arises. To ensure consistency, effectiveness and efficiency, the OPM has created and implemented a comprehensive occupational structure and classification system that is used throughout the Federal Government.

**Classification Standards**

Classification standards ensure uniformity, manageability, and efficiency in the classification of positions by providing a framework for Government-wide use. This division of employees based on similar duties and responsibilities encourages employee classification to be effectively managed. Classification standards usually include an outline of the kind of work required, background information, and criteria for determining proper grade levels. Regardless of which classification standards presentation style (Narrative, Narrative Factor, or Point Factor) is used, the purpose is to identify and define essential components that are common to all work. This foundation usually is comprised of knowledge and skills required, the degree of difficulty involved, the level of supervision received, interpersonal skills
required, risks and hazards involved in the work, and the nature of personal judgment and
initiative required. The framework that the OPM requires is simply that, and in no way is its
purpose to create a concrete and rigid system for sorting jobs into categories. While OPM has
the role of establishing basic policies and governing the classification system, each agency
has the authority and responsibility for properly classifying all of its positions.

**Position Titles**

The law (5 U.S.C. 5105) states that the OPM must create official position titles within
published classification standards. Therefore, position classification standards usually
determine the titles that will be included in each series. However, this does not discourage
agencies from creating and implementing any unofficial titles for their own internal purposes.
Unofficial titles may be appropriate and helpful for internal agency use, but are not always
descriptive of the overall occupation for Government-wide purposes. The title created by the
agency should not be one that already has been identified and implemented by the OPM and
only the approved OPM title may be used on official documents relating to a position.

**Employee-to-Class Ratio**

Based on the total number of federal employees classified as holding Administrative
Support/Clerical positions (156,696)

Total number of job classes within Administrative Support/Clerical (31)

The employee-to-class ratio is about 5055:1

**NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)**

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is the United States
governmental agency responsible for the country's public space program and long-term
civilian and military aerospace research. As it is a federal agency, all of its employee and job
classification standards must comply with those of the OPM. However, since the positions of
NASA would differ greatly than most in the Federal Government, NASA has created and implemented a unique classification system. Much like the OPM, NASA is committed to maintaining manageable and streamlined classification systems. All of NASA’s positions must be classified into one of ten potential occupational groups.

**NASA Supplemental Classification System (NSCS)**

NASA developed and implemented NSCS to distinguish positions within NASA to a greater degree than the more broadly defined categories of work and occupations defined within the OPM classification system. The NSCS is divided into ten occupational groups based on the nature of work performed and knowledge required. Those applicable to this assignment are the:

- **500 Group**, which is comprised of clerical/assistant and related support positions engaged in work requiring application of established clerical or administrative systems, procedures, and techniques of a subject-matter area or program
- **600 Group**, which is comprised of professional administrative positions engaged in work requiring application of analytical ability, judgment, and knowledge of the principles, concepts, methodology, and objectives of a complex administrative or management subject matter or program area.

**Employee-to-Class Ratio**

Based on the total number of NASA employees (466)

Total number of job classes (10)

The employee-to-class ratio is about 46:1.

However, 87% (437) of NASA employees are classified within Professional Science and Engineering. Administrative Support/Clerical comprises only 4% (18) of NASA’s workforce.
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DoD)

The United States Department of Defense (DoD) is the federal department that coordinates and supervises all agencies and functions of the government directly pertaining to national security and the military. There are various military defense agencies within the DoD, thus the need for a highly detailed classification system for internal use while remaining in compliance with OPM standards. The DoD follows the 2000 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System. The SOC was developed in response to the growing need for a universal occupational classification system. This system allows government agencies and private industry to produce comparable data.

The 2000 SOC classifies workers at four different levels:

- Major group
- Minor group
- Broad occupation
- Detailed occupation

All occupations are classified into one of 23 major groups (occupational classes). The category applicable to this assignment is Group 43-0000 Office and Administrative Support Occupations. Within these major groups are 96 minor groups, 449 broad occupations, and 821 detailed occupations. Occupations with similar skills or work activities are grouped at each of the four levels of hierarchy to facilitate comparisons.

**Employee-to-Class Ratio**

Based on the total number of DoD employees (710,757)

Total number of job classes (23)

The employee-to-class ratio is about 30,902:1.

However, Administrative Support/Clerical comprises only 4% (28,107) of DoD’s workforce.
STATE FINDINGS:

The Team identified 26 states from which data could be utilized. South Carolina is of particular interest due to its unique and effective approach in reducing the number of classifications within their system. The results of their efforts serve as a potential model for other jurisdictions seeking to streamline and condense classification structures. Classification and compensation systems utilized by these various jurisdictions include pay for performance, conventional merit pay, broadbanding, cash bonus compensation, or a combination of any of these systems. True classification systems usually are found only at the federal level.

Many states have considered utilizing some form of broadbanding in civil service classification reduction efforts. According to researchers Whalen and Guy (2008): Twelve states use a full-scale broadband system, and four use it on a limited scale. Eighteen states have considered it and decided against adoption, and the remaining 16 have not considered it. States that adopted it did so because they wanted to reduce the number of job classifications and implement pay for performance.

Three of the states that implemented the broadbanding approach found that the results were not as beneficial as originally anticipated. They discovered that unless the related administrative changes are included in the implementation plan, especially those involving budget and managerial discretion, the overall goals and objectives of the effort might be difficult to achieve. The Whalen and Guy study also contains a table of the broadbanding considerations and decisions for each state. Some states decided to implement broadbanding in order to bring about classification reduction and reform. Other states studied the jurisdictions where implementation had already taken place. Logically, if the overall costs associated with broadbanding outweighed the benefits, some other method would need to be
In 1996, the State of South Carolina Office of Human Resources performed a job reclassification exercise to simplify the operational duties associated with managing increased numbers of job classes and to stem the excessive growth of the classes themselves. Their classification and compensation system originated in 1969 and the main purposes of the system were to equitably reward employees and properly evaluate different levels of work. In just three years after its inception, the system had over 1900 job classes. From 1972 to 1989, job classes grew by a modest 300. However, from 1990 to 1996 the job classes grew by another 300, resulting in a total of 2500 job classes. The South Carolina reclassification study aimed to significantly reduce their number of job classes. South Carolina’s Employee-to-Class Value (ECV) was at 24 prior to the reform, and was successfully increased to 76 subsequent to the reform. Ultimately, the number of job classes was reduced from 2500 to 800. Much of the state-specific data comes from the South Carolina study. South Carolina sent surveys to the other 49 states in an effort to evaluate each state’s ECV as well as additional data regarding prior attempts at reclassification. There were 27 states that completed the surveys and their data was utilized as well. South Carolina’s reform was comprehensive; it extended pay flexibility for management and redesigned salary schedules.

**LOCAL FINDINGS:**

For comparative research purposes, information was collected from several local public sector agencies, these include counties and cities. The selection of agencies was based on factors such as population, services provided to citizens, geographic location, and prior classification reduction efforts. These agencies included the following:

1) Maricopa County, Arizona
2) Multnomah County, Oregon
3) San Diego County, California
4) City of Henderson, Nevada
5) City of Las Vegas, Nevada
6) City of North Las Vegas, Nevada*
7) City of Phoenix, Arizona
8) City of San Diego, California

*Although they were contacted, no information was received from the City of North Las Vegas, Nevada.

A snapshot of comparative data is included at the end of this section.

Maricopa County (AZ) is located in the south-central part of Arizona. In July 2007, the population was 3.9 million which not only made it the fourth largest county in the United States, but it also had a higher population than 24 states. The county seat is Phoenix, which is Arizona's largest city and capital. It is home to more than half of the state's residents. The classification and compensation system utilized in Maricopa County government is an informal blending of multiple classification systems. They do not consider themselves to be a true broadband system, nor are they a true classification system. Instead, they have developed what they call a broad classification system. The number of titles and ranges changes constantly as they deem necessary. Over the last several years, they have been able to reduce job titles, but also increase them when necessary. Each position is assigned to a market range title (broad job classification) that usually encompasses entry to senior level positions. Market range titles have job codes assigned to them that include an assigned job family and salary range. While there is a broad market range title description, departments maintain their own job descriptions that are more specific to their positions. As previously stated, classifications are not necessarily created or driven by a specific job family or band so they would not be considered a traditional broadbanding system. Similarly, since they generally do not have single job classifications, they cannot be considered a typical classification.
system either. They do, however, attempt to merge several job classifications into one market range title whenever possible.

**Multnomah County (OR)** is one of 36 counties in the state of Oregon. Though the smallest county in area, it is the most populous as its county seat, Portland, is the state's largest city. In 2006, the county's population was 681,454. The Multnomah County government operates under a traditional merit classification system, but they also have implemented what they call a hybrid broadband system. This system is utilized to assist in the managing of similar classifications, but not necessarily to reduce the number of classifications.

**San Diego County (CA),** with an estimated population of 3.1 million, is the second most populous county in California. The county seat is the city of San Diego. Their Human Resources Department has undertaken a streamlining effort to eliminate as many of their position classifications as possible. They began by targeting one-position classifications, but they also attempted to reduce and/or consolidate multiple tier classes into one or two classes. In San Diego County, broadbanding has been applied to non-represented and management-type classes. These efforts have successfully eliminated about 30-35% of the classes they had just 10 years ago.

**The City of Henderson (NV)** is the second largest city in Nevada. The population in 2007 was estimated at 249,386, which makes it the 73rd largest city in the United States. Henderson largely utilizes a traditional merit classification system. They have discussed making improvements to their current system, but since they currently are operating under an interim director, they have put this project on hold. Once they have new leadership in place, they intend to revisit possible options and alternatives that may be available.

**The City of Las Vegas (NV)** is an area that generally covers the downtown area as well as residential areas to the west and northwest of the Valley, a total of 131 square miles.
The population of the City is approximately 600,000 people (less than half of the County’s population), which is served by a City government of approximately 3000 employees. Las Vegas is the seat of Clark County, Nevada and due to its similar characteristics provides an excellent target jurisdiction for measurement. The City of Las Vegas offers (prospective) employees a traditional merit system with regard to compensation. Employees typically are hired in at the lowest of seven pay steps, and then annually achieve the next highest step until maximizing the earning of the particular position after seven years. While the annual merit increase technically is awarded based upon performance, the culture at the City of Las Vegas is to award the highest step increase, so that the employee can achieve the maximum salary in the position after seven years.

The City of Phoenix (AZ) has a population of 1.5 million and a City workforce of approximately 14,000 employees. It is the capital and the largest city in the state of Arizona and is very similar in climate to the Las Vegas valley. Prospective employment within the City of Phoenix is similar to other governmental units wherein a position is made available and an eligible-for-hire list is established. Criteria for the eligible-for-hire list involve either an application review or formal testing process. After the list is established, a hiring supervisor will review the resumes of those individuals on the list and ultimately select individuals for interview. Once hired, the City of Phoenix uses a traditional ‘merit’ pay increase compensation system, in which there are nine levels of pay increases called steps, for an employee to ascend. In determining an employee’s ‘equivalent combination of experience and education,’ most jurisdictions will exchange one year of employee work experience for one year of required education. However, the City of Phoenix does this and also reciprocates the benefit; thus, one year of qualified education can take the place of one year of required experience.
Many of the aforementioned jurisdictions already have implemented classification reduction programs. Several have taken a hybrid approach to broadbanding, while maintaining a number of the traditional components of a merit pay classification system. Broadbanding essentially is the grouping of jobs with similar duties, responsibilities, and levels of accountability. This approach groups jobs and helps to determine salaries in a manner that makes compensation administration more flexible and more responsive to the needs of today’s rapidly changing organizations. In addition to reducing the number of job classifications, it also widens pay ranges, facilitating organizational flexibility and encouraging individual career advancement opportunities. This approach reinforces and values the employee’s role within the agency. Broadband classifications are - by design - broad in scope and meant to describe the general body of work, not the specific duties that belong to each of the jobs included within that classification. Overall, the evidence in support of broadband and reclassification systems tends to outweigh any negatives. Proper and prudent management of a broadbanding system can yield the benefits of increased managerial efficiency for human resources departments and greater flexibility for unit supervisors.

**Agency Comparisons:**

**State of South Carolina**

1. Total # of employees - 60,772
2. Total # of current job classifications - 800
3. Total # of current job classifications in the admin/clerical family - NA
4. Total # of employees in the admin/clerical family - NA

**Maricopa County, AZ (Phoenix)**

1. Total # of employees - 13,704 (15,540 Positions)
2. Total # of current job classifications - 381
3. Total # of current job classifications in the admin/clerical family - 28
4. Total # of employees in the admin/clerical family - 3369 (4013 Positions)

**Multnomah County, OR (Portland)**

1. Total # of employees - 4152
2. Total # of current job classifications - 354
3. Total # of current job classifications in the admin/clerical family - 17
4. Total # of employees in the admin/clerical family - 507

**San Diego County, CA**

1. Total # of employees - 17,162
2. Total # of current job classifications - 1139
3. Total # of current job classifications in the admin/clerical family - 54
4. Total # of employees in the admin/clerical family - 2191

**City of Henderson, NV**

1. Total # of employees - 1929
2. Total # of current job classifications - 539
3. Total # of current job classifications in the admin/clerical family - 35
4. Total # of employees in the admin/clerical family - 236

**City of Las Vegas, NV**

1. Total # of employees - 3000
2. Total # of current job classifications - 598
3. Total # of current job classifications in the admin/clerical family - 36
4. Total # of employees in the admin/clerical family - 252

**City of Phoenix, AZ**

1. Total # of employees - 14,000
2. Total # of current job classifications - 1004
3. Total # of current job classifications in the admin/clerical family - 109
4. Total # of employees in the admin/clerical family -1355

**Contact/Interview Information:**

**Maricopa County, AZ**

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INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Review of existing literature and various agencies has revealed multiple considerations with regard to job reclassifications and wider job banding. It is the Team’s conclusion that there is overwhelming support overall for the implementation and management of wider and more flexible job classification bands. Among the Team’s interpretations of the benefits of wider job classification bands are:

1) Widely banded pay structures do not need to be updated as frequently as typical individual salary structures. This is because the wide pay ranges already include room to accommodate slight and even significant market changes with regard to salaries.

2) Managers and human resources personnel can make changes to employee responsibility and/or pay without having to create new job titles.

3) Opportunities for lateral movement increase within bands. Employees can move to different jobs without fear of reduced pay that may come with a new job title. This can lead to improvements in an organization’s cross-training efforts as well.

4) With fewer job classes, less time is spent on evaluating and developing job descriptions; also, the recruitment process for like positions is simplified.

5) Employee the evaluation process would be simplified, too, as many employees would share similar evaluation content/formats.

6) Greater leadership development potential because flexible bands are conducive to shifting employees to and grooming them for new job assignments and increased responsibilities.

Nonetheless, the Team acknowledges that there also are potentially negative connotations to the use of widely banded classifications. Some of these include:

1) Fewer vertical promotions because there is only a thin layer of management at the top of the organization. Although wider ranges can accommodate upward employee
mobility, employees do not have to be repositioned into management once they have mastered their current positions. While this may be viewed as a positive result of reclassification, the employees themselves may see this as a negative consequence.

2) Cost control of salaries must be carefully monitored. A broad job classification system without adequate internal controls can result in exponentially higher salary expenditures than a traditional classification system. There are multiple variations of banding systems that employ wider or narrower classification ranges. Any variation selected will have its own control requirements to ensure it is managed successfully.

3) Employees will need to be educated on any changes to the classification and compensation system to which they are accustomed. Transitions can be difficult, but employees must be ‘kept in the loop’ and informed of the implications of broadbanding for their careers and salaries.

In order to determine if a wider banded classification system would be appropriate for CCHR’s Administrative/Clerical job family, all available measurements need to be taken into account. The Team’s findings as to the Employee-to-Class Value (ECV) were somewhat unexpected. The calculation of Clark County’s 7911 employees across 765 job classes yields an overall County ECV of 10. However, the Administrative Support/Clerical (AC) job family on its own is statistically more efficient than all of the job classifications for Clark County combined as a whole; AC by itself has an ECV of 49. In fact, if the AC is removed from the Clark County aggregate position classification count, the County ECV noticeably dips from 10 to 8.6.

It is important to scrutinize the AC’s ECV of 49 to avoid arriving at any false conclusions. The mode of the AC job family is 3 and the median is 16.5. The lower median and mode suggest that there may be some outliers causing a possible skew of the data. Closer inspection of the data reveals that there are three job classes in the AC job family with 200+
employees and two job classes with 100+ employees. If the three job classes with 200+ employees are removed from the calculation, the ECV for the AC job family drops significantly from 49 to 29. The purpose of removing the highest three numbers is not to intentionally misrepresent statistical information; rather, it is to determine if the ECV shows room for improvement in this area and eliminate outlier data that may be giving the wrong impression of the true situation. In this scenario, even with the three highest numbers included in the analysis, the Team has determined there is indeed room for improvement. With or without removing the outliers, it is the Team’s contention that the current ECV of 49 for Clark County’s AC job family definitely stands to be improved.

To properly assess the position classification situation at Clark County, it is useful to refer to the findings from the target jurisdictions discussed earlier in this report. When the State of South Carolina conducted their evaluation in 1996, their starting point ECV was 24. From there, South Carolina was able to collapse more than 2500 job classes into 800 job classes which nearly tripled their ECV to 76 for the entire organization. It appears that Clark County’s Administrative Support/Clerical job family - either with all AC job classes included or with the top three outliers omitted resulting in an ECV of 49 or 29, respectively - still shows room for improvement in comparison to South Carolina’s ECV of 76. In other state data, Florida and Illinois, both boast ECVs of 60. Thus, even if the South Carolina reforms are disregarded, there is additional state data to suggest Clark County can make efficiency improvements with regard to their AC job family ECV. The results from the ECV evaluation in comparison to other local-level jurisdictions indicate that Clark County is performing quite well in relation local target jurisdictions. Specifically, Clark County’s AC ECV of 49 is superior to that of the City of Las Vegas - 7, City of Henderson -7, County of San Diego - 41, and Multnomah County – 30. Clark County’s AC ECV is inferior to that of Maricopa County - 143.
As for best practices, the Team has determined that the Federal Government classification system offers the most efficient method/model for classifying job positions. The Federal Government utilizes extremely wide job bands for the classification of its personnel. Unit supervisors are granted the latitude to assign unique titles of their choosing to their employees, but for internal personnel management purposes, each employee remains classified according to his/her official title. This helps to streamline and simplify the recruitment, management, and evaluation of employees at the Federal Government level.

After thorough review and evaluation of Clark County’s AC job descriptions, the Team concluded that there could be a 78% reduction in the number of position classifications within that job family. Increasing managerial efficiency while still maintaining necessary distinctions between positions, the current 32 job classes in AC could be brought down to just 7 without disrupting operations.

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<th>MEASUREMENT</th>
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<th>SYSTEM CAN BE IMPROVED</th>
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<td>Analysis of Clark County Job Descriptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client Interviews</td>
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<td>Best Practices</td>
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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team is prepared to offer two types of recommendations for CCHR/Client consideration. First, there are qualified recommendations in which the Team has great confidence as they are supported by the data - qualitative and quantitative - collected over the course of this study. Second, are the unqualified recommendations. The Team readily acknowledges that its unqualified recommendations require additional research in specific areas to substantiate them, but the potential benefits are noteworthy and thus they are being passed along to the Client, albeit with a caveat.
The primary, qualified recommendation is to collapse and consolidate Clark County’s 32 current Administrative Support/Clerical positions into a base of seven ‘mile marker’ positions along four managed employment tracks. Three of the tracks (Administrative, Financial, and Legal) would contain two positions, one on each end of the spectrum; the fourth track would contain one position (Executive Assistant). As envisioned by the Team, the four managed tracks would be:

1) Administrative
2) Financial
3) Legal
4) Executive Assistant

Essentially, the spectrum would run from the most ‘junior’ starting point to the highest ‘senior’ status end point and be adjustable to accommodate the requirements, skills, and salaries befitting an individual employee’s characteristics and role in the organization.

On the Administrative Track, the two overarching designations would be Assistant and Specialist. The Administrative Assistant designation would include these current position classes that trend toward the ‘junior’ side of the spectrum: Office Services Aide, Office Assistant I, Office Assistant II, Office Specialist, Senior Office Assistant, Secretary, and Public Services Specialist. The Administrative Specialist designation would include these current position classes that trend toward the ‘senior’ side of the spectrum: Senior Office Specialist, Senior Secretary, Senior Public Services Specialist, Administrative Secretary, and Administrative Specialist.
As with the Administrative Track, the **Financial Track** has two overarching designations of Assistant and Specialist. The **Financial Assistant** designation would include these current position classes that trend toward the 'junior' side of the spectrum: Financial Office Assistant I and Financial Office Assistant II. The **Financial Specialist** designation would include these current position classes that trend toward the 'senior' side of the spectrum: Senior Financial Office Assistant, Financial Office Specialist, and Senior Financial Office Specialist.

Following this same pattern, the **Legal Track** also has two overarching designations of Assistant and Specialist. The **Legal Assistant** designation would include these current position classes that trend toward the 'junior' side of the spectrum: Legal Office Assistant I, Legal Office Assistant II, Legal Word Processor I. The **Legal Specialist** designation would...
include these current position classes that trend toward the ‘senior’ side of the spectrum:
Legal Office Specialist, Senior Legal Assistant, Senior Word Processor II, Legal Secretary I,
Legal Secretary II, Senior Legal Office Specialist, and Legal Executive Assistant.

The Executive Assistant Track, however, is structured slightly differently than the three preceding tracks. Because Executive Assistant is a much narrower job class than others in the AC job family and as there are so few Clark County employees who hold this rather specialized position, the Team deemed it appropriate to only place one designation along the Executive Assistant Track. While there is some room to grow from ‘junior’ to ‘senior’ status (as evidenced by the salary range), the single designation remains largely the same and, therefore, encompasses these current similar (if not interchangeable) position classes: Executive Assistant, Executive Assistant to Assistant County Manager, Executive Assistant to County Manager, and Executive Assistant to County Commission.
Having discussed this concept with the Client on several occasions, the Team believes there is a real possibility that Clark County will look to implement the **Track Continuum System** or some variation of it.

Concerns were expressed that some County employees may feel threatened by what they could perceive as the potential loss of their job title and/or status. In keeping with the OPM model, the Team strongly advocates for unit supervisors to retain the ability and authority to designate the ‘street level’ titles of their staff members. Any manager-approved title can be used for business cards and nametags. Adherence to track designations is solely for internal managerial purposes. Essentially, the Track Continuum System will be invisible externally to employees and others outside of CCHR. The new system is a tool that effectively condenses 32 AC job classes down to 7, thereby reducing the burdens of position management for CCHR. Efforts involving recruitment, training, retention, evaluation, etc. in
the AC job family all will radiate from the newly streamlined seven designations along the four previously specified tracks.

It is the Team's unqualified recommendation that the Client may, at some point, wish to consider making a more comprehensive change to its classification and compensation system. The AC job family would, in fact, be a good place to start. Having reviewed the position classes in this job family, it became clear to the Team that many similar core skills are required of employees. Much of the differentiation between positions is based upon requisite levels of applied knowledge, particularly in the legal and financial realms. In addition, both years of experience and educational background create differences among employees. However, there are no positions in the AC job family requiring a Bachelor's Degree or another type of accreditation. Lastly, differences among employment duties notwithstanding, all AC employees are required to demonstrate strong communication and organizational skills. Given the vast number of parallel core position requirements, the Team questions whether most - if not all - AC positions could be collapsed into a single overarching AC job class. Within the proposed single class, a new in-coming employee would be assigned a salary commensurate with the duties that s/he would be required to perform. From whatever starting salary is agreed upon when that person enters into County employment, s/he would not be limited by the standard seven steps of the merit system. As the employee's responsibilities grow, s/he could continue to be compensated accordingly. Internal control mechanisms would be imperative to keep salary expenditures from skyrocketing. For example, one safeguard would be to dispense with automatic merit increases. Instead, any increases would be tied to an employee's enhanced duties. This was one of the central objectives of the original merit pay system; Clark County could be a trailblazer in restoring the true meaning of the term "merit" as it relates to classification and compensation. Another major advantage to having one large position classification would be
the resulting opportunity to diversify employee skill sets, encourage cross-training/cross-learning, and facilitate lateral movement among personnel. The value of having such flexibility is particularly evident at a time like this when, due to economic pressures, the needs and priorities of organizations are shifting as they adapt to current market conditions. That kind of flexibility may also provide greater job security for the individual employee who could be qualified for reassignment if a given unit is downsized or eliminated. Continuing education/training is always of value to the employee and the employer. Offering in-house training to the AC job family (e.g. legal and financial workshops that would be useful across the AC position spectrum) could bolster the County’s retention efforts and prove worthwhile to the employees who would feel validated by their employer making a genuine investment in them as their talents are cultivated for the future. These unqualified recommendations extend well beyond the scope of this evaluation, but may warrant further investigation by the Client.

**Shortcomings and Future Considerations**

In hindsight, data collection methods could have been improved for this study. From the outset, it would have been useful to have a consistent, systematic method for determining which positions should be classified under the Administrative Support/Clerical banner. There is a significant amount of variation across jurisdictions in terms of the job titles they use for what are, in actuality, positions very similar to those found in other places. A more proactive approach to the coding of job classes, ensuring like positions are being measured against each other, would have been an improvement to this project.

Greater attempts to gather additional information on the Administrative Support/Clerical job family at the state level - rather than just at the local (county and city) level - could have yielded more solid comparison data. Much of the state-level data obtained did not differentiate between job families. The state ratios contained in this report include data for entire state job classification systems as opposed to data strictly on their AC job
families. Had time permitted, the Team would have circulated a survey requesting specific
AC data from each U.S. State Government.

The Client greatly assisted the Team by furnishing much of the Clark County data
used in this study. Among the data provided were lists of the 32 job classes that CCHR
considers to be part of its AC job family. Had this been a more in-depth study, the Team
would have conducted its own comprehensive review of all Clark County job classes. If
additional job classes were identified as potentially fitting into the AC job family (beyond the
32 that already are known), they would have been factored into the evaluation.

Without a doubt, there is plenty more evaluation work to be done by future UNLV
MPA teams and it will be their good fortune to be partnered with CCHR.

This Team wishes to convey its sincere thanks to the consummate professionals at
Clark County Human Resources who so willingly and generously shared their
expertise and made this a truly rewarding learning experience.
SOURCES


INTERNET:
Reform of the South Carolina Classification and Compensation System


