



Milwaukee County
Department of Human Resources
INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

Date: December 24, 2025

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Tony Maze, Director of Total Rewards, Department of Human Resources

Subject: From the Director of Total Rewards, Department of Human Resources,
Providing an Informational Report Presenting the Compensation
Transformation Project Executive Summary

File Type: Informational Only

Introduction:

Over the past three and a half years, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) has led one of the most complex and transformational initiatives in Milwaukee County's recent history: the Compensation Transformation Project. This multi-year effort was undertaken to address long-standing structural deficiencies in the County's compensation system and to establish a more equitable, transparent, and market-aligned framework that supports attraction, retention, and internal career mobility.

The legacy compensation structure, comprised of approximately 290 stepped grades, was determined to be rigid, outdated, and inconsistent both within and across the stepped grades. In partnership with external compensation consultants, the Newport Group, and with critical support from internal stakeholders including the Office of the Comptroller, Central Payroll, the Department of Strategy, Budget and Performance, and departmental leadership, DHR pursued a comprehensive redesign of Milwaukee County's pay structure. The result was a transition to a streamlined, stepless compensation range structure aligned with market data, organizational needs and Milwaukee County's Strategic Plan.

Historical Overview:

Beginning in 2022, the County Board approved key milestones enabling compensation transformation to commence, including the elimination of steps for non-represented positions, consolidation and reduction of pay grades, and the development of standardized job families, job descriptions, and titling conventions. The project followed an iterative, job-family-based implementation approach, recognizing the operational complexity of transitioning a large and diverse workforce while maintaining continuity of daily operations.

Between 2023 and 2025, multiple job families and eligible positions—including Business Support, Finance and Accounting, Payroll and Retirement, Medical Examiner, Information Technology, Legal, Public Safety (excluding specified classifications),

Facilities and Maintenance, and the Association of Milwaukee County Attorneys—were successfully evaluated, mapped, and transitioned into the new structure.

Earlier this year, as the project entered its final phase, approximately 70% of County positions had been transitioned to the new structure. Given the scope and scale associated with transitioning the remaining eligible positions to the new structure, DHR partnered with internal stakeholders to determine an appropriate implementation timeline. The final phase was scheduled for Pay Period 25, 2025, with any applicable range changes and pay adjustments effective December 12, 2025. As of the end of 2025, all eligible job families and positions will have transitioned to the new pay structure, completing the Compensation Transformation Project. During the first quarter of 2026, the compensation team will continue to audit pay range changes and make slight rightsizing and realignment modifications, as needed.

The work of the Compensation Transformation Project has delivered a substantially improved compensation framework that is more consistent, equitable, transparent, and adaptable. Milwaukee County is now better positioned to manage compensation strategically, respond to labor market conditions, support workforce diversity and inclusion, and sustain fiscal responsibility well into the future.

Next Steps:

The Compensation Transformation Project marks a historic achievement for Milwaukee County and a defining investment in its workforce. Through a comprehensive redesign of the County's compensation framework, the project has accomplished the following:

- Replaced outdated structures with a modern, flexible, and market-responsive system that strengthens fairness, transparency, and long-term sustainability.
- Streamlined grades and standardized job families, titles, and level definitions now provide greater clarity and consistency across departments, supporting equitable pay practices and informed decision-making.
- Leaders now have the flexibility to provide advancements in pay and employees can better understand how their position compares to other positions across the County.
- Created compensation ranges grounded in best practice which will enhance the County's ability to attract and retain talent in a competitive labor market, while also clearly articulating career pathways promoting internal mobility and workforce development.

The transition to a stepless structure has significantly improved administrative efficiency and fiscal stewardship, positioning the County to manage compensation strategically well into the future. The Compensation Transformation Project has now reached a natural transition from large-scale change to ongoing stewardship—enabling the County to focus on stabilization, optimization, and strong governance through formal pay progression strategies, regular market benchmarking, post-implementation equity analyses, and continued alignment of compensation policies and procedures with the new structure.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Tony L. Maze, Director of Total Rewards

PREPARED BY:

Tony L. Maze, Director of Total Rewards

APPROVED BY:

Tony L. Maze, Director of Total Rewards

ATTACHMENTS:

None

CC:

County Executive David Crowley

Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office

Margo Franklin, Chief Human Resources Officer

Scott Brown, Corporation Counsel

Supervisor Willie Johnson, Jr., Chair, Finance & Audit Committee

Supervisor Patti Logsdon, Chair, Personnel Committee

Liz Sumner, Comptroller

Stephen Cady, Research & Policy Director, Office of the Comptroller

Aaron Hertzberg, Executive Director, DAS

Janelle M. Jensen, Director of Legislative Services, Office of the County Clerk