



Jennifer Wilson
Mayor

Briefing Memorandum

To: County Council Members

From: Crystal Hulbert

Subject: Reclassification of Operations Positions

Date: 5/09/2023

Due Date: 5/09/2023

Summary

Salt Lake County Public Works Operations has had challenges hiring and retaining personnel. This has led to concerns about meeting its contractual requirements with the municipalities we service. In August of 2022, Public Works Operations (PW Ops), an enterprise fund, in collaboration with Human Resources, began a full evaluation of the division concerning employee retention and morale, recruiting new talent, diversifying the workforce, and providing overall long-term stability of PW Ops. A retention and new hire bonus of \$2,000 was implemented in October of 2022 as a stop-gap measure to provide PW Ops with the necessary time to evaluate the division holistically and thoughtfully. A review of PW Operations has not been conducted since 2016 and was used as a launchpad for the team to assess the division starting in Fall of 2022, given that the current job market conditions have significantly changed, particularly concerning blue-collar workers. In short, employees desire better opportunities to learn and grow in an organization, with upward mobility and a career path beyond just a job with an emphasis on financial incentives. As a result, PW Ops proposes restructuring our agency to include the reclassification (job titles and job descriptions) for 67 of the 103 positions in the division, with potential pay increases for 87 positions along with a more competency based system versus years of experience organization model.

PW Ops Reorganization and Reclassification Background

The PW Ops proposal to reclassify the majority of positions in Public Works Operations and increase wages will allow our division to be competitive with other positions in public and private entities throughout the County and other counties in the state.

The reclassification will differentiate positions based on the type of work performed by the crew and position. An example of this is reclassifying a general District Worker position to Storm Drain Maintenance Worker or Road Maintenance Worker. There are a few reasons why reclassifying is helpful.

1. It allows specific job requirements to be outlined that allow for better comparison with other cities.
2. It will help potential applicants to understand the job position they are applying for more accurately.
3. It helps define the employees' job duties more accurately and have them better understand expectations.
4. The job descriptions that have been reclassified are unique to Public Works Operations.

Reclassification will allow for more upward mobility and compensation based on specific duties or certifications. As employees' complete certifications and proficiency on certain aspects of their job, they will advance to the next level without waiting for positions to open. HR, PW Operations managers, and the director of PW Operations have met on

many occasions to facilitate a structure for these changes. Management is excited to move forward with this transition and believe it is a much-needed change.

See attached appendix A: Proposed Operations Org Chart, which shows the new structure.

See attached appendix B & C: Excerpt of draft equipment certifications and draft job requirements for level advancement.

Personnel in the job description that have a level structure (I.E. I & II, or I, II, III, & IV) can move up to the level they are qualified for. Each level is either a new grade or a mid-grade advancement. Employees can reach a new level as they complete in-house and external certifications listed in their job descriptions. Approval of completion for the different certifications will require a sign off by management. Each certification will list which management positions will need to sign off on the certification. This ensures that a qualified position for that certification is reviewing the competency of the employee in that area before they have been signed off on it. Before an employee moves a level (from level I to II etc.) the employee will need to complete every certification and competency that is listed in that job description as well as have it signed off by the supervisor, manager, and the division director. Other local government entities have level advancement structures for similar positions. However, advancement in other entities emphasizes years of experience rather than certifications.

Issues to Consider/Action Item

Public Works Operations managers are excited about the proposed changes. However, as with any change of this size in an organization, there will be a high level of anxiety and concern as the new structure is implemented within the organization. Patience will be required since contractual work for our customers will take priority over testing for certifications. Communication with our employees will be vital in easing fears and reinforcing that changes in job descriptions will not negatively affect an employee financially.

Analysis of Salary Recommendations

Based on the analysis done in collaboration with HR, an average of 3% of the total increase to next years contracts is due to the proposed salary increases. All increases are paid by the contracts Public Works Operations has with other entities. The amount of the increase will vary from position to position based on the analysis done by HR, what certifications the employee completes, and what level of proficiency each employee demonstrates. These changes will result in an increased budget of approximately \$495,000 for the contract year July 2023 to June 2024 for our four contracts. Future annual budgets will reflect anticipated advancements as employees gain experience and achieve levels of certification within their job descriptions.

As a reminder, Public Works Operations employees received a \$2,000 retention bonus in December 2022, the county-wide 4% annual increase, as well as, a 2%-4% bonus in 2023. The proposed 7% average salary increase per employee would be in addition to these previous increases.

HR's analysis included a review of comparable positions at other municipalities and agencies within the County, such as Salt Lake City, West Valley City, Sandy City, and WFWRD.

Recommendation

Public Works Operations recommends moving forward with the proposed restructure and reclassification of 67 positions. These holistic changes will directly address morale and retention issues, foster talent in our agency, and open

the talent pool of potential new hires interested in public work careers providing a genuine opportunity for candidates that may not have prior experience or a particular skill set to enter into to workforce with the benefit of mentoring from seasoned employees, learning new skill sets, and earning certifications (often cost-prohibitive to gain on their own) to start and build a career. The PW Ops culture will transition to a more competency-based institution that will ensure our team has the skills and competency to fulfill its contract work with our municipalities now and into the future.

Timeline

Public Works Operations is planning on meeting with its four principal clients, Millcreek, Taylorsville, Holladay, and the MSD, individually mid-March to discuss the changes within PW Ops and a possible price increase. If our clients support the price increase as outlined, it will allow them the appropriate time to reflect the price increase in their respective budgets for the fiscal year starting in July 2023. Public Works Operations would like to implement the changes two months after an agreement on contract prices is reached, with an anticipated full launch by June 2023. Pay increases would start immediately after implementation, given that PW Ops could absorb the short-term cost with the current underspend until the new contract cycle begins on July 1, 2023.