



State of Nebraska Court Employee Compensation Study

January 4, 2014

**Mindy Masias, Human Resources Court Compensation Consultant
Eric Brown, Human Resources Court Compensation Consultant**

**Daniel J. Hall, Vice President
Court Consulting Services
707 Seventeenth Street, Suite 2900
Denver, CO 80202-3429
(303) 293-3063**

© 2013
National Center for State Courts

This document has been prepared under contract between the National Center for State Courts and the Nebraska State Courts. The views and opinions offered in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official policies or position of the State of Nebraska State Courts or the National Center for State Courts.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....4
Introduction.....5
 Study Methodology.....6
Comparative Review of Nebraska State Court Salaries.....7
Geographic Differences.....8

Salary Survey.....10
 Consultant Recommendations.....16
 Conclusion.....18
Glossary of Terms.....19

Executive Summary

In 2013 the National Center for State Courts contracted with the State of Nebraska to perform a salary maintenance review of all positions found within Nebraska State Courts with exception of Judicial Officers. The NCSC team collected and reviewed salary and related data from surrounding states and specifically targeted Nebraska governmental agencies and surrounding state courts for compensation data. The NCSC team matched the Nebraska State Court positions to benchmark jobs in the surveys by reading job descriptions, evaluating work, and making comparisons.

NCSC found with comparing like positions found working in the Nebraska State Courts that current levels of pay on average fall below market.

On average NCSC found:

- 125 Nebraska State Court positions are paying below market
- 105 Nebraska State Court positions are paying more than 5% below market and require adjustment to prevailing wage.
- NCSC found that 12 Nebraska State Court positions are at market or above market wages and do not need to be specifically addressed at this time to be paying market wages.

The State of Nebraska Court and Probation salaries in almost all classes are lower than market. It is recommended that pay increases be given to all employees where the salary range falls below market based on the percentage below market. Further, in the rare instances where some positions fall above or at market, no increases are recommended. Based on the significant cost of salary increases to match market, several implementation options are provided in the attached report.

Introduction

In 2013, the Nebraska State Courts contracted with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to assist the Administrative Office of the Courts and Administrative Office of Probation to conduct a salary and job classification review and to make recommendations on appropriate pay rates for each of the positions analyzed.

Administering and studying legal salaries can be complex due to the variables that are present and the lack of comparative state-wide data. The limited ability to study a comparative court in Nebraska creates difficulties that require a specialized salary review. Salaries are typically affected by caseload, longevity in positions, pay differentials, population, employment status, local supplements, and the structure of the state court systems. The purpose of this survey is to determine if the court's salaries are comparable with other county and bordering state court jurisdictions. To make this determination, the NCSC team used court specific data, where available, to study market salary structures, or pay ranges, compare to other courts or other government agencies.

The NCSC team collected and reviewed salary and related data from surrounding states and specifically targeted Nebraska governmental agencies and surrounding state courts. It should be noted that this survey is considered a compensation maintenance study and not a study of total compensation. Compensation maintenance studies specifically review monetary compensation in the form of annual salary. A total compensation study reviews vacation and sick time, health care benefits, retirement programs, and other compensation incentives were not reviewed for a maintenance survey. Consideration for future surveys may be to include a comprehensive review of compensation.

Salary surveys provide a valuable tool for use in determining organizational pay structures and how they relate to courts in the Nebraska area. However, survey users should not attempt to use the measures as an absolute standard for setting compensation. Care should be exercised in utilizing survey data. Before determining a final salary, individual specifics should be examined including the level of experience, the general economic situation of the court, and the prevailing municipality or county. The recruitment of such positions and retention of such positions can create compensation issues that can create salary challenges. This salary maintenance study can help set rates of pay by industry job types and potential competitive or like positions.

While the NCSC was not asked to study judicial officer salaries, judicial officer salaries are an important factor in the overall compensation analysis. Because judicial officer salaries typically represent a salary lid for the remainder of a judicial organization, they can provide a guide for executive decision makers on comparative ratio for the employees who work in the court systems. In essence, if a salary lid increases, then a cascade effect can occur throughout the organization regarding compensation of all employees.

Study Methodology

The NCSC team matched the Nebraska State Court positions to benchmark jobs in the surveys by reading job descriptions, evaluating work, and making comparisons. These benchmark jobs are identified and used as anchors for comparing internal pay levels to the court labor market. Strong survey data needs to exist for a job to be considered a benchmark. The Nebraska State Courts salary survey was conducted using the Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ) method. Caution should be used when any salary comparisons is made using only titles as position responsibilities and titles vary drastically from court to court and state to state. It is important to match job requirements rather than job titles when using survey data, as survey data alone cannot be a reliable source of data collection. An example of a job title used differently is the bailiff. This position can be used in one court for a job overseeing a large security detail, while the job in another jurisdiction might be limited to working the screening of courthouse visitors and courtroom functions.

When the PDQ method could not find a direct match for a specific job, the NCSC team used internal indicators, such as the job's level in the organization (reporting structure), along with survey data, to compensate the job. The NCSC team reviewed the survey benchmark descriptions to determine whether the State has jobs that are comparable, verifying job duties through class descriptions, position description questionnaires, job announcements, and confirmation from Human Resources professionals and subject matter experts in departments where positions are assigned. The NCSC team conducts a second review of benchmark matches once all survey data are collected and compiled for analysis to ensure the validity of matches and verify the accuracy of data collected. This follows and is in addition to the validation of data performed during each PDQ review. This second review is completed by the co-author of the report to ensure that positions are accurately matched and to ensure the data can be reported as accurate and validated to the Nebraska State Courts.

Comparative Review of Judicial Salaries

The NCSC team, in consultation with the Nebraska State Courts project team, identified a set of states to which Nebraska's judicial salaries could be compared on a statewide level. Primarily, the teams selected the comparison states based upon the highest propensity to attract the same

talent pool as Nebraska. In addition, the states were selected due to commonalities derived from geographic proximity, provision of services and scope of responsibility.

The following state courts were used for the purpose of comparing salaries in this report on a statewide level:

- Iowa State Courts
- Missouri State Courts
- Wyoming State Courts
- Colorado State Courts
- South Dakota State Courts

The team also conducted a salary comparison within Nebraska. The NCSC team, in consultation with the Nebraska State Courts project team, selected four counties based upon their propensity to attract Nebraskan applicants.

The following Nebraska counties were studied:

- Douglas County
- Hall County
- Lancaster County
- Sarpy County

In addition to the counties listed above, the NCSC team studied Custer, Scotts Bluff and Buffalo counties for rural comparison. However, after reviewing the reported data from those counties and a lack of formal salary structures, a decision was made that the data would be inappropriate for comparison, and therefore, not used in this study.¹

Of further note, while the team intended to include Kansas in the study, data from the State of Kansas was unavailable at the time of the survey. The NCSC team attempted on multiple occasions to make contact with the State of Kansas. A preliminary review found that Kansas was in the midst of recruiting new senior leadership in multiple departments including the Human Resource functions. The team determined that the prevalence of clear data from all other states who had reported would not affect the outcomes of the study and prepared the study minus salary data from the State of Kansas due to the changes in leadership in Kansas.

¹ The rural county data was reported with no salary ranges and no formal compensation practices. In consultation with officials in those counties, it was discovered that the method for setting salary was completed by individual decision makers and often times with only one incumbent. Using data with small employee populations and the lack of empirical data can create anomalies and can skew data because salaries are created based on the person occupying the position versus market value for the position.

Finally, all data was validated by a third party source. The use of a third party source allows for the study of geographical differences and confirms that overall market indicators are present and in line with the proposed NCSC benchmark salary levels. Economic Research Institute (ERI) data was purchased and used as the third party validator. ERI geographic-specific salary survey subscribers include most Fortune 500 companies, major consulting firms, and over 10,000 other organizations that rely on ERI pay data to gauge competitive compensation. ERI reflects inputs for 35,726,711 job incumbents, providing competitive benchmark comparisons for salary increase planning and staffing patterns in 12 million organizations.

GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES

Because geographic markets vary across the nation, geographic differential factors were collected by referencing the ERI *Geographic Assessor Report*. The geographic figures reflect wage and salary differentials by each geographic location (state-wide averages for all jobs reported). The geographic figures reflect the average of each state for which salary data were collected from the NCSC survey. For making data comparisons, Nebraska is considered to be the base state and all other states are compared to the base. For instance, if a state was +3.5 percent above, that state's data were decreased by 3.5 percent to be comparable to Nebraska's geographic market; if a state was -4.3 percent below, that state's data were increased by 4.3 percent. A differential of "1" means that it is equal to the State of Nebraska's geographic area.

State Differentials of Reporting States or Neighboring States²

Colorado: Statewide +8.0%

Iowa: Statewide +1.8%

Missouri: Statewide +4.8%

Wyoming: Statewide -0.6%

A professional deviation of error for this report is approximately 2.0% to 4.5% from the recommended salary match based on age matching of data.

BENCHMARK POSITIONS

A benchmark position is a position that can be matched to a position included in one of the surveys or reported data used by NCSC, and for which adequate data is available. The benchmarking of all positions is not possible due to the inability to accurately match job responsibilities and complexities for all positions. Positions that can be accurately matched to surveyed positions are used to establish benchmarks.

In general, positions that can be benchmarked are positions that:

- Are well-known, commonly understood occupations.

² ERI, 2013.

- Can be described for survey purposes in a concise manner that accurately identifies the nature of the work and the level of its difficulty and responsibility.

MARKET DATA COLLECTION

The NCSC team collected and reviewed data on numerous benchmarks. Data reported in published surveys are in various formats, thus have been adjusted to reflect common and consistent figures to draw valid comparisons. All market rates were adjusted to monthly figures based on full-time hours for direct comparison to state salaries and should have a common effective date of November 15, 2013. Market rate is a wage and salary rate paid for a specific job that is determined by analysis of the competitive job market and an alignment of internal equity. Because geographic markets are different across the nation, geographic differential factors were collected by referencing the ERI Geographic Assessor Report, as described above. Salary data from other state governments were adjusted to Nebraska income levels using the ERI assessor. Where data were reported by individual organizations, NCSC summarized data into an aggregate format by calculating the mid-point.

Potential Upcoming Market Changes

In the last two quarters of 2013, the NCSC team collected data regarding the potential for upcoming salary changes that may occur in states and counties studied. Approximately half of the study participants stated that they will be proposing salary increases over the data collected in 2013. In most cases, the proposals would be realignments to market, not across the board salary increases. This is an important component as salaries are evaluated for market comparisons. It appears that 2014 will see more market shifts upwards in judicial salaries. States such as Colorado noted they are working on wage compression programs in 2014 to help alleviate salary compression issues that have been created by salary freezes that occurred over the prior four years. Colorado noted that the compression issues occurred when new employees entered the organization and made the same amount of compensation as an employee who may have started prior to wage freezes.

Further, upon the request of the Nebraska State Courts, the NCSC studied potential employee to supervisory ratios and how they impact compensation setting. This subject has many elements and has vast associated research; the purpose of the request was to find the best levels of compensation for supervision as it relates to team leader positions, supervisors and work leaders. There is not a steadfast rule in determining a proper supervisor to staff ratio. Many courts' systems are working with work teams and less hierarchical structures than they have in the past. The subject matter of work team ratios is a popular area for discussion and the following ratios represent the consultants' recommendations for the Nebraska State Courts to create levels to gauge and define a model ratio that works best with their classification needs.

- Where there is a large number of staff performing broadly similar low level tasks, the supervisor to staff ratio may increase (1:5 up to 1:12 max).
- Where you have complex and different tasks, the supervisor to staff ration should be reduced the span (1:3 to 1:8 max).

- Work leader or team leader to employees, these positions do not perform overall supervision and would not have the ability to hire or discipline. Positions can vary from 1:3 to 1:8.

Using a set of principles on employee to supervision ratio allows positions to be classified in order of complexity of supervision. By establish norms in this area, compensation structures can be better aligned with constant maintenance. However, caution should be given that not all supervision assignments are created the same. For example new employees in teams can require more complexity that long term employees.

Salary Survey

Actual Salaries.

Based upon the comparison studies outlined above, the NCSC team found that in the aggregate, Nebraska State Courts' actual salaries are trailing in most positions. Of large concern are the number positions falling below market in both state and county data. In short if the State of Nebraska data was below market in comparison to other states it could be argued that the geographic distance and cost of living is a leading area of concern. However, because the State of Nebraska Court salaries are also trailing county compensation data found within the State of Nebraska, special concern should be raised at the number of positions falling below.

NCSC found:

- 125 positions are paying below market
- 105 positions are paying more than 5% below market and require adjustment to prevailing wage.
- NCSC found that 12 positions are at market or above market wages and do not need to be specifically addressed at this time to be paying market wages.

In order for the State of Nebraska Courts to be prevailing and competitive, which is one of the intended purposes of this study, salary adjustments are necessary. One accepted industry standard for adjusting rates based on a salary maintenance report is to attempt to adjust all positions lagging by percentage. The threshold should be defined and set by the State of Nebraska State Courts and by common compensation industry standards (within 2 to 4 percent of the survey). Below in the attached salary survey you will find that currently only 13 positions meet or are currently above market. On the other hand, 126 positions in the salary survey are currently below the market for the respective positions found in the Nebraska State Courts.

A review of the salary findings revealed that when evaluating probation and court positions no conclusion could be drawn that probation or court positions are impacted by low salaries more than one another. When reviewing the top 30 positions a near 50/50 split was found between probation positions and court positions. In short, no distinction can be made that courts are impacted greater than probation positions or vice versa by the number of under compensated positions.

Essentially, the Nebraska State Courts and key stakeholders need to determine what level of lag or adjustment level should be prevailing. For example, the Nebraska State Courts may agree to adjust all salaries that are lagging by more than 5%. In fact, comparisons by individual benchmarks indicate that the Nebraska State Courts salary range midpoints are commonly below market. While the level of competitiveness should be considered in conjunction with factors such as turnover, time to fill, quality and quantity of candidates, the further pay of a position lags the market, the more likely it is that the Nebraska State Courts will have difficulty attracting and retaining the quantity and quality of candidates it seeks if adjustments are not made to the salary ranges.

Salary Survey Table

In the Salary Survey Table below, all current Nebraska State Court employee positions are presented, identifying their pay plan, current grade, market difference, recommended increase, and recommended grade. The following survey table takes into account all data collected from both neighboring states and counties.

The positions are listed in order beginning with those of most out market range from current salaries. Each position was tracked based upon difference and current salary. Each position is followed by a recommendation of the nearest pay grade found in the current Nebraska pay charts that would bring them closer to the proposed market difference range.

The table below is color coded. Yellow represents all positions above 0.1 percent, while green represents all positions at 0.0 or above market. Also, for the purpose of the table, the following abbreviations are used for pay plans:

- A Administration
- C Courts
- P Probation
- PA Probation Administration
- PF Probation Field

Salary Survey Table: Nebraska State Court Employee Compensation

Job Title	Pay Plan	Current Grade	Market Difference	Recommended Increase	Recommended Grade
Quality Compliance Reviewer/Probation	PA	21	-28%	25%	26
Clerk Magistrate IV	C	16	-23%	20%	20
Business Analyst Supervisor	A	27	-23%	20%	31
Clerk Magistrate I	C	13	-23%	20%	17

Clerk Magistrate II	C	14	-23%	20%	18
Clerk Magistrate III	C	15	-23%	20%	19
Clerk of the Supreme Court	A	31	-22%	20%	35
Judicial Assistant	C	8	-20%	20%	12
Continuing Education Specialist	A	22	-19%	15%	25
Business Analyst	A	25	-19%	15%	28
Supervisor/Probation	PF	16	-19%	15%	19
Specialized Substance Abuse Supervisor (SSAS) Probation Officer/District Office	PF	15	-19%	15%	18
Business System Analyst / Probation	PA	25	-18%	15%	28
Juvenile Justice Resource Supervisor	PF	16	-18%	15%	19
Administrative Secretary	C	7	-17%	15%	10
Senior Business Analyst	A	26	-17%	15%	29
Records Clerk	C	4	-16%	15%	7
Senior Probation Officer/District Office	PF	14	-16%	15%	17
Specialized Probation Officer/District Office	PF	15	-16%	15%	18
Treatment Probation Officer/District Office	PF	16	-16%	15%	19
Intake Probation Officer	PF	11	-15%	15%	14
Probation Officer/Probation	PF	11	-15%	15%	14
Interstate Compact/Inter-district Transfer Coordination/Probation	PA	22	-15%	15%	25
Administrative Assistant to the Chief Justice	A	22	-14%	10%	24
Assistant Staff Attorney	A	29	-13%	10%	31
Courtroom Clerk	C	6	-13%	10%	8
Court Transcriber	C	7	-13%	10%	9
Assistant Probation Officer	PF	9	-12%	10%	11
Secretary I/Probation	PF	4	-12%	10%	6
Secretary II/Probation	PF	5	-12%	10%	7
Senior Secretary	PF	6	-12%	10%	8
Information System Specialist	A	25	-11%	10%	27
Case Monitor	PF	7	-11%	10%	9
District Data Analyst	PF	7	-11%	10%	9
Bailiff/Courtroom Clerk	C	5	-11%	10%	7
Juvenile Investigation Assistant	PF	9	-11%	10%	11

Nebraska State Court Interpreter Coordinator	A	30	-10%	10%	32
Probation District Juvenile Intake Coordinator/Probation	PF	17	-10%	10%	19
Probation District Placement Coordinator/Probation	PF	17	-10%	10%	19
Director of Judicial Branch Education	A	34	-10%	10%	36
Deputy Compact Administrator and Compliance Officer/Probation	PA	30	-10%	10%	32
Problem Solving Court Coordinator/Probation	PF	17	-10%	10%	19
Problem Solving Court Probation Officer/District Office	PF	15	-10%	10%	17
Administrative Assistant	A	21	-10%	10%	23
Reporting Center Coordinator/Probation	PF	17	-11%	10%	19
Assistant for Finance and Statistics	A	23	-9%	5%	24
Personnel Administrator	A/PA	32	-9%	5%	33
Appellate Clerk	A	17	-9%	5%	18
Appellate Clerk II	A	20	-9%	5%	21
Editorial Assistant	A	19	-9%	5%	20
Judicial Administrator II	C	25	-9%	5%	26
Reporter of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals	A	32	-9%	5%	33
Judicial Administrator I	C	24	-8%	5%	25
Criminal Traffic Cashier	C	5	-7%	5%	6
Program Development Manager/Probation	PA	29	-7%	5%	30
Research Attorney	A	27	-7%	5%	28
Network Administrator / Project Manager	A	27	-7%	5%	28
Chief Deputy Probation Officer I	PF	18	-7%	5%	19
Chief Deputy Probation Officer II	PF	19	-7%	5%	20
Chief Deputy Probation Officer III	PF	20	-7%	5%	21
Chief Deputy Probation Officer IV	PF	21	-7%	5%	22
Chief Probation Officer I	PF	22	-7%	5%	23
Chief Probation Officer II	PF	23	-7%	5%	24
Chief Probation Officer III	PF	24	-7%	5%	25
Chief Probation Officer IV	PF	25	-7%	5%	26

Administrative Secretary	A	18	-7%	5%	19
Administrative Secretary/Probation	PA	18	-7%	5%	19
Administrative Support Specialist/Probation	PA	23	-7%	5%	24
Trial Court Services Director	A	31	-7%	5%	32
Administrative Assistant/Probation	PA	21	-6%	5%	22
Assistant Counsel for Discipline	A	31	-6%	5%	32
Fiscal Analyst/Probation (Same as Trial Court)	PA	28	-6%	5%	29
Funding Specialist	PA	29	-6%	5%	30
Probation Funding Specialist/Probation	PA	29	-6%	5%	30
Contracts and Grants Manager/Probation	PA	30	-6%	5%	31
Probation Information Technology Applications Supervisor/Probation	PA	31	-6%	5%	32
Public Information and Education Officer	A	28	-6%	5%	29
Distance Learning Education Technician for Judicial Branch Education	A	21	-5%	5%	22
Probation Officer Trainee/Probation	PF	10	-5%	5%	11
Deputy State Librarian/Supreme Court Publications Manager	A	27	-5%	5%	28
Court Stenographer	C	6	-5%	5%	7
Compliance Officer/Probation	PA	27	-5%	5%	28
Statewide Drug Testing Coordinator/Probation	PA	28	-5%	5%	29
Domestic Violence Programs Service Specialist/Probation	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Fee for Service Delivery Specialist/Probation	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Financial Officer/Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Intake and Detention Alternatives Specialist/Probation (Same as a Specialist)	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Investigation and Evaluation Specialist/Probation (Same as specialist)	PA	30	-5%	5%	31

Investigation and Evaluation Specialist/Probation	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Justice Behavioral Health Specialist	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Juvenile Justice Programs Specialist (Intake and Detention Alternatives Specialist)/Probation	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Juvenile Justice Programs Specialist (Juvenile Re-Entry Specialist)/Probation	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Juvenile Justice Programs Specialist (Juvenile Services Specialist)/Probation	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Juvenile Justice Programs Specialist/Probation	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Probation Education Manager/Probation	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Programs and Service Specialist/Probation	PA	30	-5%	5%	31
Drug Technician	PF	3	-5%	5%	4
Victim Specialist	PF	14	-5%	5%	15
Deputy Clerk of the Supreme Court	A	25	-5%	5%	26
Dispute Resolution Services Coordinator -Administrative Office of the Courts	A	30	-5%	5%	31
Data Entry Clerk	C	1	-5%	5%	2
Career Law Clerk	A	29	-5%	5%	30
Division Manager	C	11	5%	5%	12
Information Technology Infrastructure Support Analyst/Probation	PA	27	-3%	0%	0%
Information Technology Data/Database Analyst/Probation	PA	28	-3%	0%	0%
Information Technology Applications Analyst/Probation	PA	29	-3%	0%	0%
Judicial Branch Education Trainer/Judicial Branch Education	PA	29	-3%	0%	0%
Probation Information Technology Data Analyst/Probation	PA	28	-3%	0%	0%
Statewide Coordinator of Problem Solving Courts	A	30	-3%	0%	0%
Statewide Child Support Referee	A	40	-3%	0%	0%

Supreme Court Deputy Librarian	A	27	-2%	0%	0%
Assistant Clerk II	C	10	-2%	0%	0%
Assistant Clerk I	C	8	-2%	0%	0%
Deputy State Court Administrator for Court Programs and Services	A	39	-2%	0%	0%
Business Manager/Probation	PA	24	-1%	0%	0%
Deputy State Court Administrator for Information Technology	A	39	-1%	0%	0%
Assistant Reporter	A	24	-1%	0%	0%
Deputy Probation Administrator Community Based Probation and Field Services	PA	39	-1%	0%	0%
Probation Deputy Probation Administrator/Juvenile Services	PA	39	-1%	0%	0%
Deputy Probation Administrator/Probation	PA	39	-1%	0%	0%
Accounting Clerk/Probation (Same as probation)	C	8	-1%	0%	0%
Accounting Clerk/Probation (Same as trial court)	PA	8	-1%	0%	0%
Director of Juvenile Placement/Probation	PA	32	-1%	0%	0%
Court Reporter	A	17	-1%	0%	0%
Administrative Fiscal Analyst	A	33	-1%	0%	0%
Assistant Deputy Administrator for Juvenile Services/Probation	PA	36	0%	0%	0%
Staff Assistant (Licensure)/Probation	PA	19	0%	0%	0%
Staff Assistant /Probation	PA	19	0%	0%	0%
Financial Officer	A	28	0%	0%	0%
Staff Attorney for the Nebraska Supreme Court	A	39	1%	0%	0%
Administrative Assistant for Court Services	A	22	1%	0%	0%
Office Manager II/Probation	PF	10	1%	0%	0%
Office Manager III/Probation	PF	11	1%	0%	0%
Office Manager IV/Probation	PF	12	1%	0%	0%
Library Technician	A	18	5%	0%	0%
Bailiff	A	19	11%	0%	0%
Law Clerk	A	27	16%	0%	0%

Setting New Salaries

In an effort to assist the State of Nebraska Courts NCSC separated the salary survey into sections based upon the difference from market alignment and actual midpoint salary. The salary survey was broken into 5% increments to accommodate the current State of Nebraska salary schedules. For example if a salary was found to be 6.2% out of alignment, the adjustment would be rounded down to 5%. This practice had to be applied to accommodate the 5% differences to all wages found in the Nebraska salary schedules. By adopting this practice all salaries can be placed into the step and grades plan for easy assignment to new ranges

Positions that were within 5% of market were given no increase because they still had the ability to progress within 5% of the start of the new step.

Consultant Recommendations

Pay Increases

The State of Nebraska Court and Probation salaries in almost all classes are significantly lower than market. It is recommended that pay increases be given to all employees where the salary range falls below market based on the percentage below market. Further, in the rare instances where some positions fall above or at market, no increases are recommended. Based on the significant cost of salary increases to match market, several implementation options are provided.

The NCSC team recommends that pay increases be given to all employees where the salary range falls below market. In cases where pay increases are more than 10% below market, a “phased in” approach may be considered in order to begin making progress toward market value. In practice, a phased in approach would allow for increases each year until market levels are achieved and would ease the burden on already constrained budgets that often prohibit the ability to make large increases. For example, if a position is currently 10% out of alignment, a 3.33% increase is given on an annual basis until the mid-point of the position catches up with the market comparison. During the period of adjustments, annual cost of living adjustments should still be administered across all positions to insure that market rates work in tandem with a cost of living increase. This particular approach is one recommendation based on the ability for state budgets to adjust to the increases in a phased in approach.

A second recommendation is for the Nebraska State Courts to adopt a threshold for adjustment, i.e., provide the recommended increases to all job classes 5% or more out of alignment with market. A one-time fix to all salaries approach would allow for a quick resolution to the compensation areas of most concern.

A final recommendation from NCSC would be for the Nebraska State Courts to use a modified percentage approach to salary adjustments. This method is currently being used by the Colorado Courts and Probation to adjust salaries. Under this method, salaries which are the most out of alignment would make the greatest progress toward reaching market value. The method also can be adopted for a phased in approach in which increase may be spread out of a 2 or 3 year period for salaries to catch up. Below is a sample structure chart, which can be modified to meet the budget and philosophical needs for the Nebraska State Courts.

- All positions that are currently 5.0% out of alignment would receive a 1.5%-2.0% increase.
- All positions that are currently 5.1% to 10.0% out of alignment would receive a 3.0% increase.
- All positions that are currently 10.1% to 15.0% out of alignment would receive a 4.0% increase.
- All positions that are currently 15.1% and higher out of alignment would receive a 5.0% increase.
- All positions found to be within 4.99% of market and would receive a normal salary increase based on cost of living adjustments.

Salary Trending / Future Salary Maintenance

There are a growing number of free, usually internet-based, salary data sources. Those in charge of setting compensation should carefully weigh whether to use this information. Any data that is self-reported by individual job holders about their own positions and salaries is not as reliable as data produced by a more rigorous survey process. Data should be reviewed by third-party professionals. Those professionals can review job matches and spot any data inconsistencies, which make that data more reliable than the self-reported data in some internet type surveys.

Conclusion

Base pay is the foundation of the compensation package which includes health, retirement, and other non-tangible benefits. How well the Nebraska State Courts' base pay programs are designed and administered will have a major impact on the organization's ability to attract and retain the skills critical to its success. If base pay is administered in a manner that is viewed as equitable and competitive, it will facilitate meeting organizational objectives. The NCSC recommends a pay increase for all employees who fall below market.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

AVERAGE SALARY

The average salary is based on the survey information with the assumption that all employees are full time.

BASE PAY

A rate of compensation for a specified position, excluding any other payments, fringe benefits or allowances.

BENCHMARK

A benchmark position is a position that can be matched to a position included in one of the surveys.

COMPENSATION MAINTENANCE STUDY

A study which reviews only the compensation of the position not the total compensation, which would include benefits such as vacation and sick time, health care benefits, retirement programs, and other compensation incentives.

PAY RANGE

The range of pay that has been established to be paid to employees performing a particular job or function.

PDQ (Position Description Questionnaire)

A standardized job evaluation and duties collection method. Often submitted by an employee describing the duties assigned and the work that is performed by them to perform the work assigned to a specific job title and job description.

MARKET RATE OR MARKET PAY

Market rate is a wage and salary rate paid for a specific job that is determined by analysis of the competitive job market and an alignment of internal equity.

RANGE MAXIMUM SALARY

The highest salary of any full-time individual of the defined group for which information is reported.

RANGE MINIMUM SALARY

The lowest salary for any full-time individual of the defined group for which information is reported.

SALARY MID POINT

The mid-point between range minimum and range maximum.