


<b>Approved by:</b> Juan Williams, Commissioner	<b>Policy Number:</b> 12-023 (Rev. 08/2021)
<b>Signature:</b> 	<b>Supersedes:</b> 11-031; 10-025; 12-023
<b>Application:</b> Executive Branch Agencies, Human Resource Officers	<b>Effective Date:</b> August 1, 2013
<b>Authority:</b> T.C.A. § 4-3-1703, T.C.A. § 8-30-104, T.C.A. § 8-30-203, T.C.A. § 8-30-205, T.C.A. § 8-30-207	<b>Rule:</b> Chapter 1120-02, 1120-03, and 1120-04

## Procedures for Developing Career Path Classifications

### Policy

Career paths are essential to employee engagement. Career pathing encompasses various forms of career progression for an employee with an ongoing mechanism to enhance knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies. The career path will outline typical avenues among and across jobs in way that facilitate career advancement, growth and development. For the State of Tennessee, career paths are flexible positions driven by functional specifications consisting of three basic paths: individual contributor, manager, and executive. This policy will mainly focus on the individual contributor.

### Definitions

**Individual Contributor:** As an *individual contributor*, an employee can deepen functional expertise, which includes moving from and serving as an entry level core team member; to taking an ownership for the work or program area with minimal direction; and finally managing increased complexity and scope of work, which supports the manager to drive results. Both *Management* and *Executive* career paths involve leading people or teams.

**Career Path Position:** A career path position may be filled with an employee qualified to perform the job at the entry, working, or advanced level. Agencies may use career path classifications when attracting and retaining competent employees for hard-to-fill occupations with complex duties. In addition, the use of career path classifications provides inexperienced applicants with training opportunities designed to develop required job-related competencies.

The Department of Human Resources may elect to create a career path within the individual contributor level to function as a transition between the expectations of a new hire and an experienced employee.

A career path series consists of 3 classifications within the individual contributor level of an occupation with the following levels of distinction: entry, working, and advanced. These levels are designed to transition an employee from the expectations of a new hire to that of an experienced employee. An

employee progresses through the stages of the career path by meeting both probationary and performance standard milestones and the minimum qualifications of the next classification in the series.

### **Steps for Agencies to Follow when Designing Roles for Career Pathing**

1. Conduct a review of your organizational structure
  - a. Updating the agency's organizational chart will be the key to understanding the hierarchy and relationships of positions in the agency's organizational structure.
  - b. The following questions can assist in supporting discussions about and agency's organizational structure:
    - i. What roles/occupations are critical to your industry, based on your agency's mission or vision?
    - ii. What positions are most difficult to fill or keep filled? Agencies should identify their 2-5 hard-to-fill<sup>1</sup> and high turnover roles.
    - iii. What changes does the agency anticipate to occupations in their industry, based on evolving technology or other factors?
    - iv. How do people typically enter the agency's industry? What are the lower, middle, and higher-level entry points for people based on their skill level? This should be for each role: Individual contributor, manager, or executive.
2. Define key responsibilities for the agency's job classifications within the Career Path
  - a. Agencies should review job specifications and/or conduct a job analysis of their mission critical job classifications.
    - i. Include knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for each role.
    - ii. The agency may also have to conduct benchmarks of external industry classifications.
  - b. Agencies should be mindful to keep job descriptions very high-level and short. Write job descriptions in a language that anyone applying to the position can understand. Avoid acronyms and jargon that is related directly to state government.
3. Identify core competencies and expected behaviors for each role
  - a. This may include conducting a benchmark of external industry classifications.
4. Determine how career path classifications will work for your agency
  - a. Career path positions progress to the next level after minimum qualifications; necessary special qualifications; knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies (KSAC); and performance requirements are met.

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<sup>1</sup> A hard-to-fill position is any position that requires specialized skills or education and takes more than six months to fill.

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- b. This moves the employee through the career path at a regular interval instead of forcing the agency to post the promotional opportunity.
5. Agencies should engage their Talent Management Director/team to partner with Human Resources to align learning platforms to career paths.
  - a. Train agency supervisors on succession planning and the use of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) in order to streamline the learning partnership to the employee's career path.

### **Requirements for Posting a Career Path Position**

When a career path position becomes vacant, the agency may promote an eligible career path employee while still following standard preferred service procedures to fill the vacancy.

A position using a career path classification may be posted at any level within the career path series. The agency must designate which level of the career path series to post. If an appointment is not made from the referred list, justification must be provided before the agency is allowed to post a different level in that career path series.

### **Process**

Employees appointed to career path classification must successfully complete the required probationary period, training, and performance standards before advancing to the next classification without further assessment, certification, or probationary period.

### **Unsuccessful Performance**

Failure of a probationary employee to demonstrate the expected performance standards will result in the separation of that employee prior to the end of the probationary period or demotion at the agency's discretion. An appointing authority may recommend that an employee be removed from a career path classification position during the required probationary period.

### **Guidelines**

- A. Career path classifications must:
  - Be a working level job classification below the lead or supervisory level job classification in a job series;
  - Be budgeted at the highest-level job classification in the career path;
  - Be included in a series of classifications with an increase in scope and complexity that progresses through the entry, intermediate, and advanced levels.
- B. Employees hired into an entry level job classification will:
  - Be appointed to the entry level job classification and be mismatched into the highest level position;

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- Serve a probationary period of one or two years as designated by the classification. Near the end of the probation period, the appointing authority must assess if the employee has mastered the knowledge of applicable rules and regulations or attained the skills necessary to conduct basic duties under close supervision. If not, the employee must be removed from the position or demoted, at the agency's discretion;
    - If an employee has completed twelve months of a twenty-four month probationary period and has met their job performance expectations, the agency may request an increase in the employee's salary equal to one half (1/2) of the increase the employee would receive if promoted to the working level job classification. This increase shall occur after the first year of the probationary period has passed;
  - Receive an annual performance evaluation prior to the end of his or her probationary period documenting that the employee has successfully demonstrated that he or she has met the performance standards and expected outcomes established by the agency during the performance review cycle. The employee must receive at least a *'Meets Expectations'* rating;
  - Progress to the working level job classification without further assessment, certification, or probationary period; and receive an adjusted salary per the state's promotional salary policy at the end of their probationary period.
- C. Employees hired into a working level job classification will:
- Be appointed to the working level job classification and mismatched into the highest level classification;
  - Serve a probationary period;
  - Progress to the highest-level job classification without further assessment or certification if the employee demonstrates that they exceed the performance expectations of the working level position;
  - When moved to the next career path level, have his or her salary adjusted in accordance with the state's promotional salary policy.
- D. Employees who progress into the working level job classification from the entry level classification through the career path will:
- Promote to the working level job classification and be mismatched into the highest level classification;
  - Progress to the highest-level job classification in the career path without further assessment or certification if the employee demonstrates that they have exceeded the expectations of the working level position;
  - When moved to the next career path level, have his or her salary adjusted in accordance with the state's promotional salary policy.

## General Requirements

An applicant who is offered and accepts employment in a career path position must sign an awareness statement (copy attached) stating his or her understanding of the progression to the highest-level classification.

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#### **Other Related Processes**

When an employee is eligible for a salary increase as provided by the Tennessee General Assembly, a career path salary increase should be made in addition to but after any legislative salary increase. The Department may make additional adjustments as necessary. All salary adjustments are subject to budget limitations.

Questions regarding this policy may be directed to the Agency Resource Center (ARC).

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Attachment – Awareness Statement Form (PR-0455)

**Awareness Statement**

I understand I am being appointed to a(n) \_\_\_\_\_(entry level position or working level position) and mismatched into \_\_\_\_\_(the highest level position in this job classification career path). With this appointment, I am aware that I will be on probation for \_\_\_\_ year(s).

One Year Probation: Prior to the end of my probationary period, I understand I will receive a final performance evaluation and will progress (promote) to the working level position of this classification career path without further assessment, certification, or probationary period as long as my job performance evaluation demonstrates that I have meet the performance standards and expected outcomes established by my agency and I will receive a salary increase based on the state’s promotional salary policy. This will be confirmed with at least a ‘Meets Expectations’ rating.

Two Year Probation: I will receive a performance review at the end of the first year. If I meet the job performance expectations set forth in this review (i.e., at least ‘Meets Expectations’), my salary will be increased equivalent to one half the increase I would receive if promoted to the working level job classification.

At the end of the second year, I will receive a final performance evaluation and will progress (promote) to the working level position of this classification without further assessment, certification, or probationary period as long as my job performance evaluation demonstrates that I have met the performance standards and expected outcomes established by my agency and I will receive a salary increase equal to the increase received at the end of the first year or my salary will be adjusted to the minimum of the range of the working level classification. This will be confirmed with at least a ‘Meets Expectations’ rating.

I understand that to progress to the advanced level, I must receive an ‘Exceeds Expectations’ or higher on my annual performance document.

General Provisions: I understand that all salary increase provisions set forth in this awareness statement are subject to the state’s laws and budget requirements/limitations in effect at such time the salary increase would otherwise occur.

If at any time I do not meet the job and/or work expectations, I understand that I will be removed from this position in accordance with standard practice, which may include separation from state service.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee ID

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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A copy of the signed awareness statement should be submitted with the electronic personnel action form (ePAF) to the Agency Resource Center (ARC). It is recommended that the original signed awareness statement be maintained in the employee's personnel file within the agency's Human Resource Office.