WINNEBAGO COUNTY MERIT PAY PLAN

(As amended July 2023)

Section 1 Purpose and Scope

(a) This Merit Pay Plan is designed to motivate employees to develop and contribute to the best of their ability, to identify those aspects of employee performance most needed to achieve department and County goals, and to provide for pay increases within the range tied to employee performance.

(b) This Merit Pay Plan applies to all Full-Time Regular and Part-Time Regular employees of Winnebago County except for elected officials and those whose compensation is subject to collective bargaining as a public safety employee. It does not apply to temporary, project, casual, seasonal, or client/restitution employees.

Section 2 Establishment Pay Increase Amounts

(a) As part of the County budget process, the County Executive will include in the Executive Budget an amount designated for a schedule increase in the Winnebago County Compensation Schedule. The schedule increase will be a percentage increase that will apply to the control points, minimums, and maximums of each grade in the Compensation Schedule. The schedule increase may be in any amount, including zero.

(b) The schedule increase, in the amount approved by the Board during the budget process or an any other time if thought necessary, will apply to the pay of each regular employee as of the first of the year following approval of the county budget, or as of such other date as may be set by the Board, except that if an employee's pay is above the maximum for the employee's position, the employee's pay will not be increased until it again falls below the maximum.

(c) As part of the County budget process, the County Executive will also include in the Executive Budget a percentage to be used for merit pay increases, as further described in Section 5 of this Compensation Plan. The merit pay increases will be 2.0% of the employee's current pay, unless a different amount is set by the board.

(d) Before determining the schedule increase and merit pay percentage to be included in the county budget, the Executive may consult with the Finance Director and Director of Human Resources regarding the projected availability of tax levy, savings achieved in the payroll base through employee turnover, and other factors as the Executive may see fit.

Section 3 Annual Performance Evaluations

(a) Each employee to whom this Plan applies will receive an annual performance evaluation from his or her supervisor. Evaluations will be completed and shared with employees during the period from September 1 through October 31 each year.

(b) The performance evaluation will be based on the employee’s performance during the rating period from September 1 the previous year through August 31 of the current year.

(c) The performance evaluation will be completed on a form approved by the Director of Human Resources. Evaluations will be based on four metrics:

1. Core competencies (alignment with County core values)
2. Job knowledge (ability to perform required duties)
3. Professional development and growth (training and learning)
4. Goal review (achievement or progress on established goals)

(d) The performance evaluation forms will also include space to list goals for the upcoming rating period, to describe progress toward the goals previously established, for the evaluator to make comments regarding the employee’s general performance or training and development needs, and for comments by the employee.

(e) The number of goals achieves should not be the sole focus of goal review. Rather, an expansive view on establishing meaningful and attainable goals and objectives, and evaluating appropriate progress based on a realistic timeline, is encouraged.

(f) Each department is responsible for identifying and providing employees with appropriate improvement opportunities for training and development. Employees will not be penalized for a lack of offering by the department. However, when offered, it is the employee's responsibility to take advantage of the opportunity.

(g) Performance evaluations are to be based solely on employee performance during the rating period. Supervisory employees must strictly avoid any bias or favoritism when preparing evaluations, and will be evaluated themselves based in part on how well they evaluate others.

(h) In order to promote consistency, each supervisor who is not a department head should submit each proposed evaluation to the department head, or to another County manager designated by the department head, for review before the performance evaluation is shared with the employee.

(i) Performance evaluations must be shared with the employee in a face-to-face meeting whenever possible. The employee may submit written comments to the Human Resources Department and to the employee’s supervisor or department head within two weeks of the evaluation, and any comments so submitted will be attached to and become a part of the evaluation record.

(j) In addition to the annual performance evaluations called for by this Plan, all supervisors are strongly encouraged to provide frequent and regular feedback to employees through other appropriate means.

(k) When completed, all annual performance evaluations must be submitted to the Human Resources Department and will be placed in the employees’ personnel files.

Section 4 Newer Employees and Transfers

(a) Any new employee who starts work on or before July 1 will receive an annual performance evaluation and is eligible to receive a merit pay increase the following January 1.

(b) A new employee who starts work after July 1 will not be eligible to receive a merit pay increase until January 1 following completion of a full year of employment with the County.

(c) Although merit pay increases may not be applicable, new employees should nevertheless be evaluated at least twice during the trial period, using either the annual performance evaluation form or some other suitable evaluation form.

(d) An employee who has transferred from one position in the County to another is eligible for merit pay without any waiting period. If advisable, the employee's current and former supervisors should share information to produce a joint evaluation of the employee's performance during the rating period.

(e) The evaluation of an employee hired on or after January 1 of the evaluation year should be based on the employee's performance from the date of hire through the date on which the evaluation is given, and the employees evaluation the next year should be based on performance from the previous evaluation date through the following August 31.

Section 5 Award of Merit Pay Increases

(a) As part of the performance evaluation, the evaluator will make a determination as to whether the employee has earned a merit increase for the year.

(b) The determination regarding an employee's merit increase will use the metrics outlined in section 3(c). The determination for an employee whose current pay rate is below the control point will be based on core competencies and job knowledge. The determination for an employee whose current pay rate is at or above the control point, but less than ten percent above the control point, will be based on core competencies, job knowledge, and professional development and growth, and may require that a higher standard be met than for an employee whose pay is below the control point. The determination for an employee whose current pay rate is ten percent or more above the control point will be based on core competencies, job knowledge, professional development and growth, and goal review, and may require that a higher standard be met than for an employee whose pay is less than ten percent above the control point.

(c) Employees whose base pay is at or above the maximum of the pay range will not receive a merit pay increase for that year. If the employee's pay is below the maximum, but a merit pay increase would move it above the maximum, then the employee's pay will be increased to the maximum.