

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 4, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #67: IDENTIFYING THE UPGRADE AND DEVELOPMENT OF CAREER LADDERS IN THE CITY AND ADDRESSING PUBLIC SAFETY COMPRESSION ISSUES

The purpose of this memo is to respond to the City Council's request to more fully identify how monies allocated to the City's Career Ladder program will be used and to discuss staff's approach to addressing the public safety compression issues.

SUMMARY:

If approved by City Council as part of the FY 2013 budget, the \$500,000 allocated to career ladders will likely be used in funding the movement of employees in existing career ladders to the next job classification level within their program. The additional \$400,000 under consideration by City Council to address public safety pay compression will be allocated as a result of the analysis of public safety salaries to be completed later this year.

The City of Alexandria's Career Ladder Program is designed to provide upward mobility to employees who grow in skill and capability to meet increased job responsibilities. These programs provide both management and staff with greater flexibility to more effectively and efficiently accommodate their overall work requirements and meet the goals and objectives of their departments or agencies. Therefore, the City has developed a structure to provide salary increases to recognize the attainment of career levels and developmental milestones that assure that the City's career ladder positions are paid comparably with those in the primary labor market.

Career ladder programs are also designed to provide a structure for current employees in a career path to move from one position to another position, and to receive pay increases in addition to merit increases, in recognition of growth in skills and abilities.

The general rule is that once a career ladder program is approved and established, employees may advance through the career ladder one "rung" at a time. (Ex. Inspector I can only move to Inspector II). Attachment A is a list of all current approved City Career Ladders and the number

of employees who currently occupy job classifications within the Career Ladder program.

BACKGROUND:

The current Career Ladder Program requires departments to “define the maximum number of employees who can, at any one time, be working at each ‘rung’ of the Career Ladder. These numbers of employees are to be determined by the projected work requirements anticipated at the different ‘rungs’ of the ladder, using past experience and previous work measurement studies.” The number of employees for each proposed career ladder “rung” was limited based upon a variety of factors such as the requirement that employees working at a particular “rung” lead or supervise a defined number of employees - a requirement that a department may not be able to accommodate.

The Career Ladder program is also based on the premise that there needs to be budget-authorized positions assigned to the departments. This premise assures that the level or grade of budgeted positions in the affected classes will not be changed or artificially increased by career ladder programs. These constraints were to assure that the Career Ladder program would not alter the positions authorized for a Department. The result of this practice is employees often have to wait until the next level of the Career Ladder become becomes vacant before they can be elevated to the next “rung”. An example of how this work is: The Police Department has a Career Ladder in their Police Officer series – PO I, PO II, PO III, PO IV. Currently, if the PO III level of this Career Ladder has reached the defined maximum number of employees, a police officer who is at level PO II and who has acquired all the required work requirements to be elevated to a PO III, is put on a waiting list until a PO III vacancy occurs.

We have not been aggressive in the development of Career Ladders in the City. There are at least 24 class series which potentially can be converted to Career Ladders instead of promotions. Promotions can only occur if there is a vacancy. Whereas, Career Ladders can be established for employees to move from one class series to another once they have achieved the developmental requirements. The City benefits from a workforce which is more skilled in the areas in which they work and the employee benefits from having attained additional position requirements and an increase in their base salary.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Review all current City Career Ladders to assure that anyone eligible for elevation is elevated regardless of whether there is a vacancy or not. This will require a review in order to assure that the City’s position count stays the same. This can be completed by September 1, 2012. Therefore all employees who are currently in a Career Ladder series who have completed the developmental requirements shall be elevated by October 1, 2012.

As noted in Attachment A there are 718 participants in the current Career Ladder program. Of this total amount 196 employees have reached the top tier of their respective career ladder, thus it is possible for 522 employees to elevate to the next “rung” of their career ladder. Assuming all 522 employees have reached the eligibility requirements to advance to the next rung, the cost in salaries and associated benefits to do elevate these

employees is approximately \$1.6 million (see table below).

<u>Cost to Elevate Current Career Ladder Participants</u> <u>Impacting approximately 522 employees</u>	
<u>Total Estimated Cost</u>	<u>\$1,695,000</u>

It is more likely however that not all 522 employees are eligible to advance within their career ladder program at this time. For example, the Alexandria Police Department currently has approximately 145 officers at the Police Officer I-III level, but only 28 (or 20%) are currently on a waitlist to advance within the career ladder program. The table below shows the cost to advance the 522 career ladder participants under different assumptions of eligibility.

<u>Cost Assumptions for Varied Eligibility of Employees</u>	
100% Eligible for Career Ladder Elevation	\$1,695,000
75% Eligible for Career Ladder Elevation	\$1,271,250
50% Eligible for Career Ladder Elevation	\$847,500
25% Eligible for Career Ladder Elevation	\$423,750

2. Through a process which will involve working collaboratively with Departments, Human Resources will identify class series which will support a Career Ladder. (Attachment B is a list of Potential Career Ladders including the number of employees currently occupying those positions). Several Departments have already identified class series which they would like converted to Career Ladders. Once the class series have been identified, Human Resources will work with each Department to identify the developmental requirements to implement a class series. The Departments who have already identified class series and designed the developmental criteria for elevations shall be reviewed within the first three months of the fiscal year. By December 2012, we will have identified which new career ladders to implement and will establish those ladders along with procedures that outline how employees will progress.

Of the potential job classes noted in the table in Attachment B, there are potentially 319 employees who could be elevated to a higher job classification (or "rung") if their job series was part of the Career Ladder Program. If all 319 employees became participants of the Career Ladder Program and were elevated to the next level, the cost would be approximately \$982,000 (see table below).

<u>Cost to Elevate Participants in "Potential" Career Ladder</u> <u>Impacting approximately 319 employees</u>	
<u>Total Estimated Salary Increase</u>	<u>\$982,000</u>

The next table shows the cost to advance employees based on various assumptions about the percentage of employees who would actually be eligible to advance to the next

highest job class.

<u>Cost Assumptions for Varied Eligibility of Employees</u>	
100% Eligible for Career Ladder Elevation	\$982,000
75% Eligible for Career Ladder Elevation	\$736,500
50% Eligible for Career Ladder Elevation	\$491,000
25% Eligible for Career Ladder Elevation	\$245,500

3. Increase the elevation from the current 3% plus placement for each Career Ladder elevation. It will be important for Human Resources to thoroughly research this proposed increase, in order not to create or exacerbate compression among those employees who currently are in Career Ladder series. There may need to be some adjustments to current employees' salaries who are in a Career Ladder to assure that new employee's salaries do not elevate above theirs, thus causing compression issues. (Ex. An employee at level III of the Career Ladder makes \$60k. An employee at Level II is now eligible for an elevation and because HR has adjusted the elevation amount to 5% the Level II employee will be elevated to Level III at a salary of \$62k. This inevitably causes compression and employee consternation). This research will be concluded by December of 2012, thus any recommendation for the percentage increase of elevations will be effective January 1, 2013.

Public Safety Compression and Comparability

The Human Resources Department has established a work group in each of the public safety departments, Police, Fire, and Sheriff. The study groups consist of HRD staff from the Total Compensation Division and public safety departmental managers, human resource liaisons, and employee group representatives. The purpose of the groups is to collect and jointly analyze data related to special pay, (e.g., hazmat, K-9, shift differentials), and pay progression (the interaction of step frequency and amount, the number of proficiency levels, time-in-grade requirements, promotional pay increases, longevity pay, etc.) to determine their impact on career earnings. This type of analysis will compare how the City's pay structure and practices deliver pay over an employee's career relative to the pay provided public safety employees of our five comparators. The analysis will help identify and alter specific pay structures or practices to achieve comparability as defined in the City's Compensation Philosophy.

Total Compensation staff has persuaded the conveners of the Fairfax County Public Safety Forum (an annual public safety compensation data collection forum) to collect data in a manner conducive to this type of analysis. The Forum convenes May 23, 2012. Following data collection the study groups will meet regularly to validate data, analyze the City's comparability, cost remedial actions and recommend changes to pay structures or practices. It is anticipated that the study groups will report out by mid to late summer 2012.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Current career ladder positions and participants
- B. Potential career ladder positions and participants
- C. Charts #1-4: Distribution of employees within current and potential career ladder positions as of April 2012 by grade and step

STAFF:

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Bill Mitchell, Assistant Director, Total Compensation, Human Resources
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CURRENT CAREER LADDER PARTICIPANTS

JOB CLASSIFICATION	# OF EMPLOYEES IN JOB CLASS (AS OF APRIL 2012)
ASST CITY ATTORNEY V	3
ASST CITY ATTORNEY IV	1
ASST CITY ATTORNEY III	2
ASST CITY ATTORNEY II	2
ASST CITY ATTORNEY I	0
ASST COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY V	2
ASST COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY IV	3
ASST COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY III	2
ASST COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY II	3
ASST COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY I	2
ASST PUBLIC DEFENDER II	2
ASST PUBLIC DEFENDER I	4
BUDGET-MGMT ANALYST III	0
BUDGET-MGMT ANALYST II	4
BUDGET-MGMT ANALYST I	2
CODE INSPECTOR III	15
CODE INSPECTOR II	4
CODE INSPECTOR I	5
CONTRACT SPECIALIST III	2
CONTRACT SPECIALIST II	1
CONTRACT SPECIALIST I	1
DEP FIRE MARSHALL III	5
DEP FIRE MARSHALL II	0
DEP FIRE MARSHALL I	1
DEPUTY SHERIFF IV	0
DEPUTY SHERIFF III	35
DEPUTY SHERIFF II	39
DEPUTY SHERIFF I	28
DETECTIVE III	14
DETECTIVE II	14
DETECTIVE I	13
HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR	13
EQUIPMENT OPERATOR II	12
EQUIPMENT OPERATOR I	11
FIREFIGHTER II	54
FIREFIGHTER I	48
FLEET SERVICES TECH II	0
FLEET SERVICES TECH I	8
LABORER III	13
LABORER II	21
LABORER I	0
LEGAL SECY II	6

LEGAL SECY I	6
MEDIC II	54
MEDIC I	0
PERMIT TECH II	2
PERMIT TECH I	5
POLICE OFFICER IV	58
POLICE OFFICER III	32
POLICE OFFICER II	34
POLICE OFFICER I	77
PRKNG ENFCMNT OFFCR III	1
PRKNG ENFCMNT OFCR II	13
PRKNG ENFCMNT OFCR I	7
T&ES INSPECTOR II	9
T&ES INSPECTOR I	2
URBAN PLANNER III	11
URBAN PLANNER II	10
URBAN PLANNER I	2
TOTAL	718

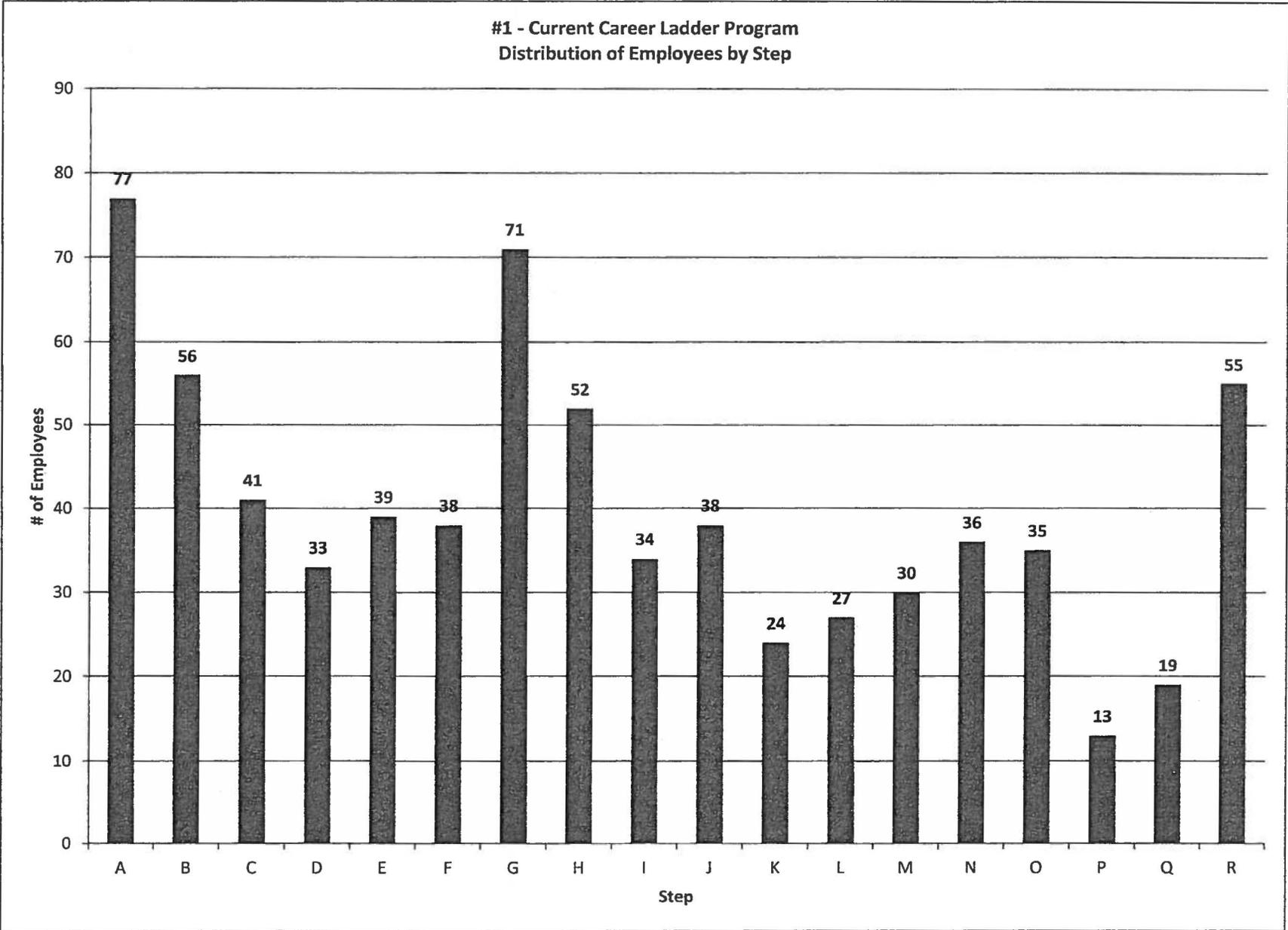
POTENTIAL CAREER LADDER PARTICIPANTS

JOB CLASSIFICATION	# OF EMPLOYEES IN JOB CLASS (AS OF APRIL 2012)
ACCOUNT CLERK IV	6
ACCOUNT CLERK III	25
ACCOUNT CLERK II	15
ACCOUNT CLERK I	3
SENIOR APPRAISER	3
APPRAISER	1
CIVIL ENGINEER IV	7
CIVIL ENGINEER III	9
CIVIL ENGINEER II	3
CIVIL ENGINEER I	1
COMPUTER PRGOGRAMMER-ANALYST IV	4
COMPUTER PRGOGRAMMER-ANALYST III	4
COMPUTER PRGOGRAMMER-ANALYST II	8
COMPUTER PRGOGRAMMER-ANALYST I	1
CURATOR II	4
CURATOR I	1
DATABASE ADMINISTRATOR II	4
DATABASE ADMINISTRATOR I	1
GIS ANALYST II	2
GIS ANALYST I	1
HORTICULTURAL SPECIALIST II	1
HORTICULTURAL SPECIALIST I	1
SENIOR HUMAN RESOURCES ANALYST	8
HUMAN RESOURCES ANALYST	2
HUMAN RESOURCES TECHNICIAN II	8
HUMAN RESOURCES TECHNICIAN I	7
SR HUMAN SERVICES BENEFITS PROGRAM SPECL	1
HUMAN SERVICES BENEFITS PROGRAM SPECL	20
IT SUPPORT ENGINEER III	12
IT SUPPORT ENGINEER II	2
IT SUPPORT ENGINEER I	1
LABORER III	13
LABORER II	21
LABORER I	13
LIBRARIAN IV	1
LIBRARIAN III	6
LIBRARIAN II	7
LIBRARIAN I	14
LIBRARY ASSISTANT III	1
LIBRARY ASSISTANT II	12
LIBRARY ASSISTANT I	23
LIBRARY ASSOCIATE II	5

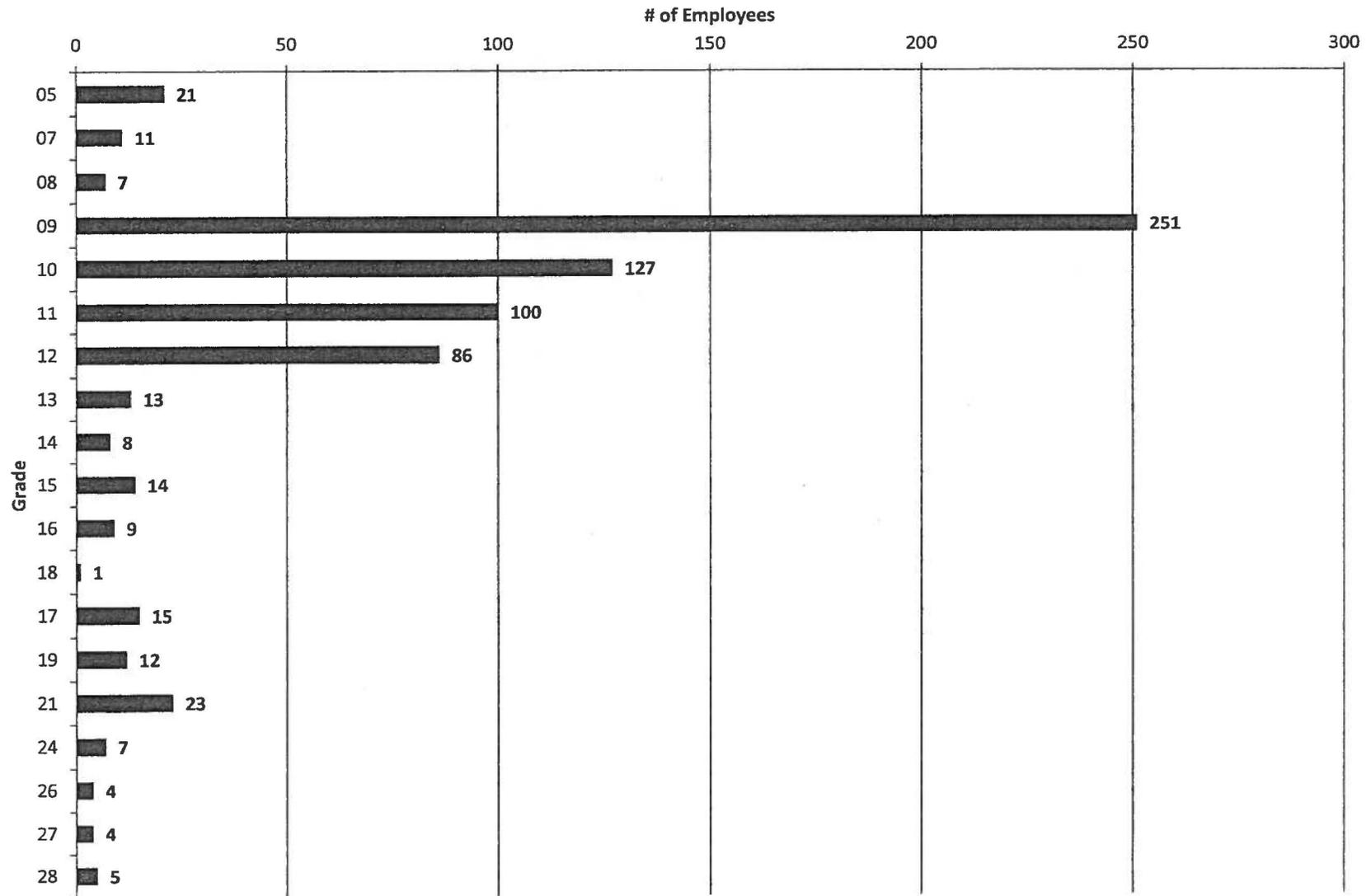
LIBRARY ASSOCIATE I	3
MANAGEMENT ANALYST III	9
MANAGEMENT ANALYST II	6
MANAGEMENT ANALYST I	9
NETWORK ENGINEER III	5
NETWORK ENGINEER II	5
NETWORK ENGINEER I	0
SENIOR PLANNING TECHNICIAN	3
PLANNING TECHNICIAN	1
SENIOR RECORDS CLERK	10
RECORDS CLERK	25
SOCIAL WORKER III	7
SOC WORKER II	47
SOC WORKER I	21
VICTIM-WITNESS SPECL II	4
VICTIM-WITNESS SPECL I	0
TOTAL	437

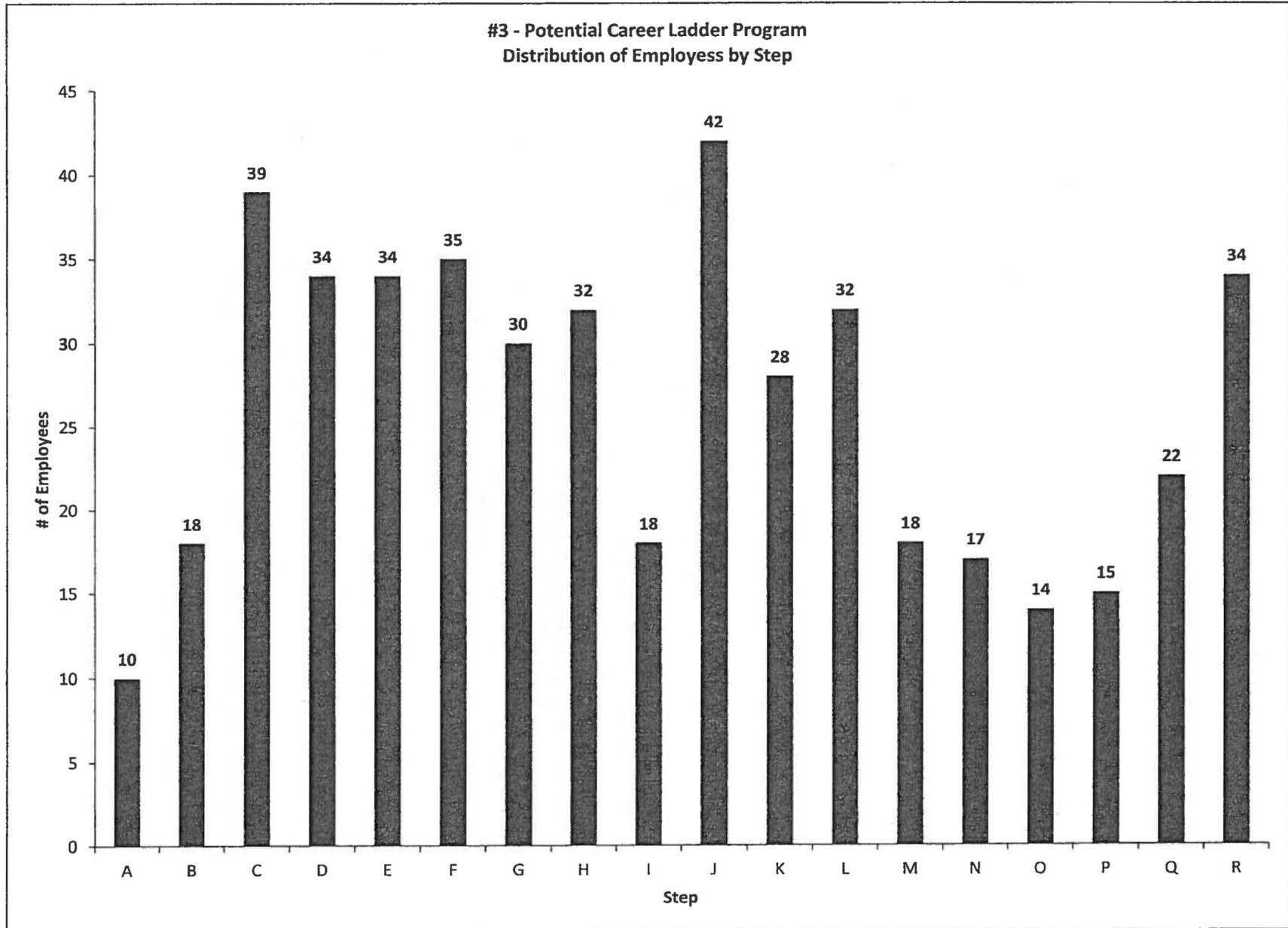
Several Departments have already identified Class series which they would like converted or expanded into Career Ladders. Once the class series have been identified, Human Resources will work with each Department to identify the developmental requirements to implement a class series. Below is a list of career ladder proposals that have been submitted to Human Resources and are currently under review:

Department	Job Classification
Code Administration	Plans Examiner
Emergency Communications	Emergency Communications Technicians & Supervisors
Fire Department	Medics
Fire Department	Firefighter
General Services	Fleet Technicians
General Services	Building Systems Technicians
General Services	Facilities Maintenance Technicians
Real Estate Assessments	Appraiser/Senior Appraiser
Transportation & Environmental Services	Engineering Aide



2 - Current Career Ladder Program Distribution of Employees by Grade





#4 - Potential Career Ladder Program Distribution of Employees by Grade

