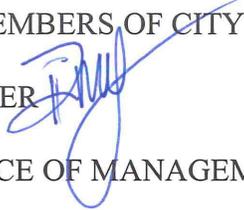


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 14, 2014

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER 

FROM: NELSIE L. SMITH, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #7: CAREER LADDERS

This is a response to Councilman Wilson's request to provide history and detail on the City's career ladders program. Since FY 2013, the City has significantly expanded this program. Career ladders provide upward mobility and salary increases to employees who grow in skill and capability and demonstrate readiness for increased job responsibilities.

Career ladders are proposed by Department Heads when they have an identified need to address recruitment/retention issues and/or employee development needs within specific job series in their department. Proposals submitted by Department Heads are evaluated and approved by the Human Resources Department (HRD). Job series that are developed into career ladders typically have multiple levels and elements for progressive advancement based on differentiating work and skill-set requirements. Obtaining the skills and abilities to perform a higher level of work is what justifies the pay increases associated with advancement. It should not be assumed that career ladders are appropriate for every job classification in the organization, particularly those that perform a singular function in the organization.

If an employee is eligible, he or she can be elevated to a higher grade within their job series, but there are specific criteria for advancement, which is developed collaboratively between HRD and the relevant City departments. Recent work has focused on expanding ladders and building the appropriate infrastructure to allow for transparency and an understanding of how advancement works.

The City has a total of 748 employees that are currently in career ladders, more than half of which (53%) are "career ladder mobile," which means that the employee is assigned to a job classification that is (1) part of a career ladder, and (2) not at the final/top level of the career ladder series. Essentially, the employee still has the ability to elevate and receive a salary increase as he or she develops additional skills and the ability to assume increased job responsibilities.

Employees Currently in a Career Ladder	Number of Employees	%
General Scale	202	27%
Sworn Public Safety	546	73%
Grand Total	748	100%

Career Ladder Status	Number of Employees	%
Mobile	396	53%
Not Mobile	352	47%
Grand Total	748	100%

Since FY 2013, approximately \$2.1 million has been budgeted specifically for career ladder investment.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Budgeted In</u>
FY 2013	\$500,000	Non-Departmental
FY 2014	\$900,000	Non-Departmental
FY 2015 Proposed	\$700,000*	Individual Department Budgets

*Proposed FY 2015 is the first year in which all career ladder funding is included in departmental budgets.

Over the last few years, there has been an established strategy by HRD to increase the size, scope and effectiveness of ladders, starting with Public Safety departments (such as Fire, Police, and Sheriff) where there was a significant need. Recent activity has also centered on expanding ladders for General Schedule employees. In total, between Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014, there have been 207 employees elevated via ladders to-date, and by the end of FY 2015 there will be an estimated 41 career ladders established in 25 different departments. The below tables give details about the cost and distribution of elevations to-date as well as the number of employees in career ladders:

FY 2013 Career Ladder Elevations:	
Number of Employees Elevated	117
FY 2013 Cost (salary + benefits)	\$413,186
Annualized Cost (salary + benefits) ¹	\$584,934
FY 2013 Career Ladder Budget	\$500,000

FY 2014 Career Ladder Elevations:	
Number of Employees Elevated ¹	90
FY 2014 Cost (salary + benefits) ¹	\$427,999
Annualized Cost (salary + benefits) ^{1,2}	\$522,428
FY 2014 Career Ladder Budget	\$900,000

Department	Employees	%
DEC	1	1%
City Attorney	3	3%
Code	4	3%
Commonwealth Atty	6	5%
Police	54	46%
Public Defender	1	1%
Recreation	3	3%
Sheriff	43	37%
T&ES	2	2%
Grand Total	117	100%

Department	Employees	%
Code	1	1%
Commonwealth Atty	2	2%
Fire ¹	17	19%
Police	59	66%
Sheriff	9	10%
T&ES	2	2%
Grand Total	90	100%

Pay Scale	Employees	%
General	26	22%
Police	48	41%
Sheriff	43	37%
Grand Total	117	100%

Pay Scale	Employees	%
DSEFM *	9	10%
Fire ¹	17	19%
General	5	6%
Police	59	66%
Grand Total	90	100%

Average Pay Increase (\$) \$5,176
Average Pay Increase (%) 5.91%

Average Pay Increase (\$) \$5,805
Average Pay Increase (%) 6.70%

(1) Assumes employees are at elevated grade for an entire fiscal year (since some elevations occur during a fiscal year, and not on July 1).

(1) Does not include \$750k or 167 employees for Phase One of Fire's Career Ladder Program (i.e. Market Alignment).

(2) Assumes employees are at elevated grade for an entire fiscal year (since some elevations occur during a fiscal year, not on July 1).

*Deputy Sheriffs, Medics and Fire Marshalls Pay Scale

Even though a decrease is shown above in elevations from FY 2013 to FY 2014, this change does not capture \$750,000 spent on Phase One (of two) of the Fire Department's Career Ladder Program. These funds, effective June 22, 2013, focused on Market Alignment for non-supervisory positions, which needed to occur before the expansion of the Department's career ladder program could take place, hence their exclusion from the above tables. These funds affected an additional 167 employees in FY 2014 (see the table to the right for Market Alignment detail). The year-over-year decrease in elevations was also due to the alleviation of a multi-year build-up and backlog of eligible elevations in FY 2013 that was not as prevalent in FY 2014.

Job Classification	Number of Employees
Firefighter I	43
Firefighter II	67
Medic I	1
Medic II	47
Deputy Fire Marshal II	2
Deputy Fire Marshal III	5
Assistant Fire Marshal	2
Grand Total	167

Average Pay Increase 5.55%