

Chapter 5

Decentralized Classification Program

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Decentralized Classification Program

The New York State Classification and Compensation Program is administered as a blend of centralized and decentralized decision-making. To facilitate decentralized decision-making, and to provide expedited review and processing of certain transactions, the Director of the Division of Classification and Compensation authorizes all operating agencies to classify or reclassify certain permanent, temporary, or seasonal positions in designated titles in accordance with the Decentralized Classification Program. There are two components to this program: Decentralized Titles and Decentralized Agencies.

Title Decentralization

All State agencies participate in the Decentralized Titles component. This program includes those titles for which the duties and organizational placement are so well understood and documented that extensive review by the Division of Classification and Compensation of each transaction for these titles is not necessary. Decentralized Titles are noted on the Title and Salary Plan in two ways:

- Under the "1A" column the designation of "Y" indicates that a title is a Decentralized Title; and
- Under the "Decntrl Lvl" column "S" indicates that the Decentralized Title is appropriate for "Pass-Through" classification to the Division of the Budget. When the transaction is submitted it is automatically approved by C&C, and is forwarded directly to the Division of the Budget for fiscal approval, provided the agency has or had positions in the title within 12 months previous to the date of the transaction and the agency requests the standard title attributes.

Agency Decentralization

This program is only available to those agencies that have been pre-approved for participation by the Director of Classification and Compensation. Agencies in this program can classify and reclassify positions 1.) For all titles that have a Classification Standard provided positions in that title already exist in the agency, and 2.) For interdepartmental titles (IDP titles) for which a tentative or final Classification Standard has been issued.

No class which is unique to an agency may be classified under this program by another agency, unless the title has been formally approved in that agency by the Division of Classification and Compensation following the submission of a Long Form transaction complete with justification letter, duties description and organization chart, and other pertinent documentation.

Designated Decentralized Agencies cannot reallocate classes, establish new titles, or authorize Special Salary Treatments.

Limitations

The following provisions describe exceptions to the two Decentralized Classification Program components described above:

- Positions in a Personnel Office setting may not be classified or reclassified under this program except to titles designated as “1A” in the Title and Salary Plan.
- A “Long Form” transaction (4N or 4R) must be submitted for an otherwise Decentralized Title if there are no positions classified in the title at the agency. The purpose is to ensure that the title is being used appropriately in the requesting agency. If approved, additional positions in that title may be (re)classified on a decentralized basis in that agency.
- A “Long Form” transaction (4N or 4R) must be submitted for an otherwise Decentralized Title if the position is to be established in an atypical organizational context, or if other than the normal attributes are being requested, e.g., a different negotiating unit or jurisdictional class.

NYSTEP Transactions

NYSTEP form 1A is used for decentralized classification of new positions.

NYSTEP form 2A is used for the decentralized reclassification of an existing position to an authorized title. In such instances, the determining factor in using this form is not the present title, but the title to which the position is being reclassified.

NYSTEP has been designed so that only transactions that are eligible for processing using the 1A and 2A forms can be submitted. If an ineligible title is used, an error message will appear indicating that the transaction cannot be completed as entered.

Documentation

“Short Form” transactions in NYSTEP (1A and 2A) are programmed so that an agency can submit a request without attaching any documents. Although supporting documentation need not be attached to the 1A or 2A transaction at the time of submission, information must be included on the “Comments” panel that states:

- 1.) The reason for the classification action,
- 2.) The organizational context of the position, and
- 3.) An attestation that the duties of the position have been compared to and found consistent with the Classification Standard for the title.

It is recommended that additional information be included that summarizes the functional responsibilities of the position(s) and how they meet the classification criteria for the title. This information is reviewed when the transaction is audited and will assist the C&C Analyst in determining whether or not to request that the entire Reviewable Record be submitted for audit.

Reviewable Record

Under the terms and conditions of the Decentralized Classification Program, and in compliance with State Internal Controls, a Reviewable Record of each transaction must be established and maintained by the requesting agency Personnel Office. The required Reviewable Record must consist of a position description, a brief memo or equivalent documentation that explains why the position was needed and how it meets the classification criteria for the title, and an organization chart. All records are to be stored in electronic formats and prepared in full prior to the submission of a transaction in NYSTEP. These records must be made available as requested by the Division of Classification and Compensation for either Pre-Audit or Post-Audit Review.

Position Descriptions

All positions classified within the framework of this program are required to have a duties description that includes all of the activities and tasks expected to be performed by an incumbent. Descriptions of positions classified in "1A" titles may be brief provided such information is sufficient to support the classification. See the "Duties Descriptions" chapter of this manual for guidelines.

While the foundation of the Decentralized Classification Program is the existence of Classification Standards for Classified Service titles, it should be noted that the Classification Standards are written to describe the broad scope of work that would be properly assigned to positions in these titles. The Standards cannot and do not include all of the work that might be appropriately assigned to all positions classified in these titles. Therefore, when writing position descriptions, the criteria as stated in the Classification Standard should not be copied. Rather, the position description or duties statement should reflect the tasks and activities that an individual in that particular location would be expected to perform.

Basis for Classification

In addition to the position description, a memorandum or other written document must be in the file that explains how the classification criteria for the

title have been met. In many instances this need not be an elaborate narrative. For example, "As a Keyboard Specialist 2 the incumbent will supervise the activities and workflow in a unit staffed by four Keyboard Specialists 1. Therefore, the classification criterion for supervising a group of lower level Keyboard Specialists has been satisfied." However, there may be occasions where the application of a Classification Standard requires a sufficient amount of judgment so as to distinguish from among related occupations or levels within the occupations. In such instances, the written record should contain some reference to the various options available and the reason for the one selected.

Audit Evaluation

A transaction may be audited before C&C makes a determination (Pre-Audit) or after the transaction has received fiscal approval from the Division of the Budget (Post-Audit).

Pre-Audit

Generally all decentralized transactions that receive Pre-Audit review are those which involve Decentralized Titles that are designated as "1A" in the Title and Salary Plan but are not designated "S" in the "Decent Lvl" column of the Title and Salary Plan. Transactions submitted by Decentralized Agencies that involve titles that have a Classification Standard are also subject to Pre-Audit. In addition, some Pass-Through transactions, which are typically Post-Audit transactions, are randomly selected by NYSTEP and routed to the work list of the C&C Analyst for Pre-Audit review.

Following a review of the information submitted on the "Comments" panel of the 1A or 2A, the C&C Analyst will decide whether or not to request that the Reviewable Record be attached to the transaction and submitted for review.

Post-Audit

Generally all decentralized transactions that receive Post-Audit review are those which involve titles that are designated as both "1A" and "S" (in the "Decent Lvl" column) in the Title and Salary Plan. These are the "Pass-Through" transactions that, upon submission by the agency into NYSTEP, will automatically show as "C&C Approved," provided they are not randomly selected for Pre-Audit on NYSTEP.

Following a review of the information submitted on the "Comments" panel of the 1A or 2A, the C&C Analyst will decide whether or not to request that the Reviewable Record be attached to the transaction and submitted for review.

If, as a result of the Post-Audit, a position is found to be misclassified, the C&C Analyst will contact the agency Personnel Office and discuss a variety of corrective actions, including the position earmarking process.

Appendix C summarizes which forms to use, what documentation to attach, and audit status of transactions. Appendix D is a checklist that summarizes position classification factors.

Program Evaluation Criteria

The staff of the Division of Classification and Compensation will periodically evaluate the quality of agency compliance with the requirements of the Decentralized Agency Classification Program. This will involve a review of the records maintained by the participating agencies, supplemented by selected job audits and conferences, as needed. It is expected that agency personnel staff will maintain a Reviewable Record, adhere to Classification Standards, and show evidence of adequate staff work and sound judgment.

Participants in the Decentralized Agency Classification Program will be evaluated on two criteria: soundness of the classification determinations and adequacy of the documentation.

It is expected that existing Classification Standards will provide a sufficient basis for making sound classification decisions for "1A" titles. In regard to the application of a Classification Standard to a particular position, we can foresee some differences of opinion which may result in classification determinations being different than those which would have been made by C&C staff. Most noteworthy is the fact that Classification Standards frequently provide criteria which support a range of complexity and responsibility within a given class. It is expected that this full range be reflected in classification determinations. Patterns of using only the lower range will, in the long run, result in an erosion of the overall standards. Appropriate application of the classification criteria will be a factor in the evaluation of an agency's ability to properly classify positions in this program.

The evaluation will also assess the adequacy of the documentation maintained by each agency. It is expected that each agency will maintain a Reviewable Record as noted above. Duties descriptions will be reviewed for clarity and completeness, while the supporting documentation will be reviewed for the presence of adequate descriptive information, comparative analysis, and evidence of a technical evaluation. Any pattern of inattention to the maintenance of proper documentation will be sufficient basis to terminate the program in that agency.