

The Willis Point-Factor Evaluation System

Statute requires that the Salary Commission base salaries on realistic standards and set salaries that are commensurate with the duties of the job. To objectively meet this requirement, at times the Commission has utilized the Willis System to aid in determining appropriate salaries for the state's elected officials.

Point-Factor Evaluation Systems

A point-factor evaluation system determines the value and requirements of a position. The appropriate salary is then determined by other factors such as market.

Most point-factor evaluation systems are derived from the Hay Point Factor System which was developed in the early 1940's and is primarily used in the private sector.

The Willis System

The Willis System was developed in the 1960's by the late Norman Willis. It is an objective and quantitative approach used to evaluate the value of a job. The relative value of a job is determined through the application of compensable factors such as knowledge and skills, problem solving, mental demands, and accountability. Relative value levels within each factor are assigned specific points. The total points assigned to a job determine its location in a pay structure.

The state of Washington began using the Willis System in the mid-1970's and still uses it today in setting salaries for executive and managerial positions.

Use of the Willis System by the Salary Commission

The first Commission began its salary setting work in early 1987. That Commission used the results of a State Committee on Salaries' 1986 Willis study in setting the salaries of the Executive Branch positions. In 1987 we also entered into a contract with Mr. Willis to evaluate the position of legislator and to determine whether additional money should be granted to legislators with leadership responsibilities.

In 1989 the Willis studies were not used but in 1991 they were. The Willis studies were not used again until 2003 because some commissioners believed the recommendations of the early studies were too high.

During the 2001 and 2003 salary setting sessions, commissioners became increasingly concerned about the lack of objective data to assist them in making salary decisions for legislators and judges. They were also concerned that the information on the Executive Branch positions was outdated. In 2003 we:

- contracted with the Department of Personnel to evaluate the nine Executive Branch positions; and
- contracted with Owen-Pottier Human Resource Consultants to evaluate the position of Legislator and the four levels of state elected judges.

In 2005 we contracted with the Department of Personnel to update the 2003 evaluation of the Executive Branch positions. The responsibilities of some positions had changed and there were concerns whether the positions were correctly aligned.

In 2007 we contracted with Owen-Pottier to evaluate legislative leadership positions to determine whether their duties and responsibilities warranted receipt of a stipend for their leadership duties.

As a result of these evaluations and other data, benchmarks were established for the positions in all three branches of state government:

- Executive Branch – appointed state agency heads
- Legislative Branch – positions in the state's Exempt Management System (EMS)
- Judicial Branch – judges on the federal bench