

Exploring Part-Time Opportunity and Wage Equity in Lane County Employees



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Draft Report

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About the Institute for Policy Research and Engagement

The Institute for Policy Research and Engagement (IPRE) is a research center affiliated with the School of Planning, Public Policy, and Management at the University of Oregon. The IPRE is an interdisciplinary organization that assists Oregon communities by providing planning and technical assistance to help solve local issues and improve the quality of life for Oregon residents. The role of IPRE is to link the skills, expertise, and innovation of higher education with the transportation, economic development, and environmental needs of communities and regions in the State of Oregon, thereby providing service to Oregon and learning opportunities to the students involved.

About the UO – Lane County Policy Lab

The University of Oregon’s School of Planning, Public Policy and Management and the government of Lane County started a partnership in 2018 to provide applied learning experiences for students, applied research settings for faculty and staff, and technical assistance to the Lane County government.

This project was funded in part by the UO – Lane County Policy Lab.

The Policy Lab Research Team for this Project

The team for this project was composed of four Master of Public Administration students. The report was initially prepared as part of their Capstone course in the Winter-Spring terms of 2018. The report was updated and completed in February 2019 with new employee pay data and analysis by Dr. Clark

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Executive Summary

In the fall of 2017, the Lane County Government reached a labor agreement with one of the eight bargaining units that represent county employees to better align the benefits of all union-represented county employees. Following that process, the county sought answers to two related but distinct questions:

- Why do employees move from full-time employment to part-time employment?
- Are Lane County employees of different genders or races paid equitably for similar work?

To find the answers, Lane County partnered with the School of Planning, Public Policy and Management (PPPM) at the University of Oregon to conduct a study within the newly developed Lane County-UO Policy Lab. This project is the first for the Policy Lab and was undertaken by a team of four Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree candidates in the completion of their Capstone project. The team analyzed employment data from Lane County, comparing it to other Oregon county governments and the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. The team also conducted group and individual interviews and distributed an online survey to Lane County employees.

Findings related to the first research question include the following:

- Of the 200 employees who participated in the survey, 35% of full-time employees would prefer to work part-time, however, are faced with perceived barriers to movement. The following themes emerged from the survey and group interview results.
 - Choosing to work fewer hours leads to a loss of benefits and therefore is perceived as a barrier to movement, as individuals cannot support themselves or families without these benefits.
 - At times, managers would like to create an additional part-time or full-time position within their department but cannot due to budget restrictions.
 - Employees indicated a perception of slow upward mobility for part-time employees is leading to high rates of turnover in part-time employment. Schedules reflect, that while employees would like the option to choose more flexible schedules, including part-time, current contracts and policies limit the availability of such choices.

Findings related to the second research question identify the following information:

- Accounting for all union affiliations, job titles and pay grades, Lane County's workforce is paid equitably across races and genders. Only in one instance is there a suggestion in a difference in pay based on gender, and none based on race.
- Lane County and other counties in Oregon will struggle to get a fully accurate picture of equity among like positions until the following tasks are completed:
 - Simplifying current employee classifications
 - Including professional experience and education within the study
(data are not achieved in a machine-readable format)

The following report provides further detail about these findings, offers insights for further exploration, and provides recommendations for next steps.

About the MPA Capstone Project

A team of graduate students pursuing a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree from the University of Oregon School of PPPM conducted this employment study in winter and spring of 2018 in fulfillment of the MPA Capstone requirements. A professional consultant familiar with Oregon county governments assisted the team. This was the inaugural project of the newly launched Lane County/UO Policy Lab, a research and policy assessment partnership between the University of Oregon and Lane County.

The team conducted a mixed methods study consisting of both qualitative and quantitative methods, including group and individual interviews, an online survey distributed to all Lane County employees, and point-in-time employment data collected from December 31 of each of the years 2013-2017. Data was also gathered and analyzed for comparison purposes from four other Oregon counties, as well as the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This study applies a model that is specific to part-time employees, which helps to better understand this workforce's differences from full-time employees. Recommendations consider employment laws and policies that are relevant to the public sector.

The report revision was completed in February 2019 by Dr. Benjamin Clark. The revision and update pertain only to the pay equity portion of the study. Dr. Clark was able to refine the pay equity statistical models upon receiving more detailed job classifications from Lane County. This revision allows for a more accurate and detailed assessment of pay equity.

About Lane County

Founded in 1851, Lane County, Ore. is the fourth most populous county in the state with approximately 370,000 residents, of whom approximately 50.8 percent are female, 82.3 percent are white and 17.7 percent are non-white. Residents live and work throughout Lane County's 4,722 square miles, which includes urban, agricultural, forest, wetland, and coastal land uses, extending from the Cascade mountains in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west. There are 12 incorporated cities within Lane County, as well as several unincorporated cities and part of the reservation lands of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians. Connecting, serving, and interacting with each of these jurisdictions and residents is the Lane County Government.

As of December 31, 2017, Lane County employed 2,083 workers, of whom 82.9 percent identified as white, 14.4 percent as non-white¹, and 2.7 percent chose not to specify. Employees' self-identified genders were 44.8 percent male and 55.2 percent female. Fewer than 10 percent of employees at the end of 2017 were categorized as part-time (86), while the majority, (1,997 employees), were listed as full-time. Lane County utilized 199 job classifications for its employees and managed employment contracts and maintains employee relations among 8 bargaining units.

¹ For the purposes of this study, individuals who did not self-identify as "white" or "unspecified" were categorized as "non-white."

Why do employees move between full-time and part-time employment?

Part-time employees are not monolithic and they fall into six different categories that have predictable behaviors. These six categories² can help better understand workplace inclusion, pride in their employer, value alignment with their employer, and can help predict employee movement to or from part-time (or to another company)—see the box to the right for specifics on these categories. To answer the question of why Lane County employees choose part-time the research team developed group interview and survey questions that align with these identified categories, and analyzed responses to each using statistical methods and content analysis.

Process

The survey was conducted online and was sent via email by Lane County Human Resources to all employees. Of the approximately 2,100 employees, a total of 201 people responded to the survey, though not every respondent completed the survey. Among respondents, 11 employees identified as Part-Time, 11 as Extra Help, and four as Temporary. Group interviews were conducted at the Lane County Public Service Building in Eugene over a two-day span in April. A total of ten participants took part in one of four group interviews during that time.

Findings

The survey and group interviews identified three themes: connection to Lane County, changing between part-time and full-time, and barriers to movement.

Six Categories of Part-Time Employees used by the Research Team

- **Primaries:** This part-time job makes up 50 percent or more of their household income.
- **Married Supplementers:** This part-time job supplements other income (i.e., spouse's income) and accounts for less than 50 percent of total household income.
- **Single Supplementers:** This part-time job supplements other income (i.e., alimony, disability, etc.) and accounts for less than 50 percent of total household income.
- **Students:** Job provides discretionary income or to cover school-related expenses
- **Part-Time Moonlighters:** Also receive household income from another part-time job.
- **Full-Time Moonlighters:** Main source of household income is the part-time employee's full-time job.

² This categorization is based on the idea of "Partial Inclusion Theory" developed by Wittmer and Martin.

Connection to Lane County

A predictor of turnover is how connected employees feel to an employer, (e.g., if their values align, if they share with friends and family that they like working for their employer, if they perceive fairness, if comparable employment elsewhere is possible, etc.). Among the 180 respondents to this section, there was 70 percent agreement that employee values aligned with Lane County. Employees were also in high agreement (74 percent) that they tell their friends Lane County is a great place to work. These two measures indicate a low likelihood for turnover – if other employee needs are met. As a caution, employees are in 69 percent agreement that pay is fair, and there was 66 percent agreement that they could "find a job with another employer as good as the one I have."

Changing between part-time and full-time

All employees were asked about their motivation when choosing to work part-time or full-time. The "extremely important" motivating factors were benefits (47 percent), flexibility (45 percent), pay (42 percent), and schedule (42 percent). However, when it comes to what Lane County could change to improve their job, the rankings were pay (40 percent), flexibility (20 percent), benefits (19 percent) and schedule (6 percent), with other responses indicating improved training and resources. These results were consistent with employee perceptions recorded during group interviews and with written explanations of these rankings.

Interestingly, just over 35 percent of current full-time employees³ indicated they would choose a part-time schedule if circumstance permitted. Employees who had experienced changing between full and part-time in the past 5 years indicated pay and benefits were of most importance to the change. For these employees, family caregiving was also "extremely important" to their decision. Indeed, employees of all types shared that more flexibility would be important to care for their families, for improving their work-life balance, and that productivity was not necessarily tied to specific numbers of hours worked. Having more flexibility was described as not being confined to a five-day, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. schedule, having the ability to work from home or remotely, and having the opportunity to work ten hours, 4 days per week.

To identify barriers or assets to potential movement, employees who experienced moving between full and part-time shared that supervisors, co-workers, and union representatives made the transition "extremely easy," but the only factor that made the transition "extremely difficult" for some respondents was human resources. The larger barriers to movement seem to be more rooted in employee perception and current employment policy.

³ This figure is weighted to ensure responses are proportional to the workforce by full-time (64.43 percent), part-time (1.92 percent), extra help (30.53 percent), and temporary (3.12 percent).

Illustrative quotes from Employees

"I'd like an option to work 32 hours per week and still have benefits available, even if for additional cost."

"I think I could be just as, if not more productive, by being part-time, while still being able to care for my family and succeed in other aspects of my personal life."

"I have little kids and I would love to be able to pick them up when school is over."

"Better pay might/would offset lower benefits."

"I would like to be able to adjust schedule from week to week easily or work from home to accommodate [workplace] needs as well as my family needs."

Three types of barriers emerged: loss of benefits, slow upward mobility, and budget restrictions. Many employees would prefer to work fewer hours but cannot because of loss of benefits. A common employee opinion is that by offering a scale of benefits proportional to hours worked, the county could retain more talented individuals and enjoy a higher return on investment when training new employees. The perception is that someone working .75 FTE should be eligible for .75 benefits, a pay differential that covers the difference, or upward hourly wage adjustment if benefits are waived. What this means is that if the organization usually provides \$1000 per month towards health care and a full-time employee is responsible for paying \$250 per month, then an employee who works .75 FTE, for example, would pay \$500 per month, while the organization would cover the remaining \$750 per month.

The second perceived barrier is that there are high rates of part-time employee turnover and low rates of full-time turnover, especially in the senior positions. The difference seems rooted in generational approaches to the workforce. Seasoned employees entered public service with an expectation that the structure was stable, reliable, and a position they could grow into slowly. A perception expressed by some employees was that this structure is no longer as effective because the labor market has changed and less experienced employees expect upward mobility opportunities to pair with performance and few expect to retire with the same organization that hires them right out of school. This difference in the new labor market may be a reason for higher levels of perceived turnover, especially in departments that rely on extra help.

The final barrier to movement is budget restrictions, where departments cannot add new positions because they cannot afford to create a position with benefits. The perception of the lack of resources was cited frequently by study participants.

Limitations

Because the response rates to both the survey and the group interviews were low, approx. 8.6 percent overall for the survey and below the research team's goal of 20 or more group interview participants, the results may not be fully generalizable to all Lane County employees.

Quotes from Employees

"[There are] missed opportunities... you especially see that with our intern program, you see a lot of very talented people and then you can't hire them because of the lack of turnover, or because if you get someone in a position, they say, I'm not going to stay in this position because I am upwardly mobile, I really want to go someplace and I can't stay because this isn't going to get me anywhere."

"I earned a bachelor's or master's degree and I want to use it to its full potential, I don't want to be stuck at a level 1 forever."

Pay Equity

Nationally, researchers have found that the gap in pay between men and women is closing. Mandel and Semyonov (2014) looked at the hourly rate of men and women in the United States from 1970-2010. They found that the gap in hourly rate has gone from \$0.657 in 1970 to \$0.356 in 2010. A study conducted by Miller (2008) found that the average hourly rate between male and female employees in the private sector favored male employees by \$.30. That gap was \$.20 in the public sector. In other words, the gender wage gap is diminishing and is less pronounced in the public sector.

Choi (2015) expanded on this research and looked at how race affects the pay gap. Choi found that there is a relationship between race and hourly rate, however, like with gender, the gap in pay between white and non-white employees is decreasing. Despite this progress, Choi's study showed a \$0.26 difference in hourly rate between white and non-white employees. Of note, Choi highlights that the progress made at the mid-managerial and entry levels can be masked by the demographics at the top. Specifically, that despite equitable representation in the general workforce, there are still more men than women in higher paid and higher skill positions.

A survey of 384 chief procurement officers in the public sector illustrates what the pay gap can look like in one specific job title. Survey results show a 14% pay gap between male and female chief procurement officers, with male procurement officers making higher salaries. Additionally, the male chief procurement officers included in the survey were responsible for more employees and larger procurement volumes. These results suggest that further analysis of pay equity across job titles and classifications is needed (Alkadry and Tower, 2011). This would provide a more complete understanding of pay equity.

In this report, the research team seeks to evaluate if Lane County employees doing comparable work, receive comparable pay regardless of their race and/or gender. To accomplish this the research team conducted a statistical analysis of five years of employment data taken at a single point in time, (all employees working on December 31 of each year). Comparisons, where available, from four other comparable Oregon counties, are also presented.

Process

Lane County provided two data sets. The first contained point-in-time data for a period of 5 years (2013-2017), including employee ID number, job title, employee type (regular, temporary, or extra help), hourly rate, union affiliation, sex, age, ethnicity (race), full time/part time designation, pay grade, pays step (within grades), and hours per week. The second data set highlighted employee full-time/part-time changes during the same period. For comparison, the same data was requested of five Oregon counties which Lane County regularly studies for such purposes: Washington, Jackson, Marion, Deschutes, and Clackamas. Of these, all but Washington County supplied data.

Steps of analysis

The following steps were taken to answer the research question, using data from the Lane County Human Resource Department:

1. Data cleaning and recoding. (Some additional details on these steps can be found in Appendix 2.)
2. Regression models using data from 2013-2017 were run to assess if there were differences in the hourly wage based on gender and race, controlling for a number of other characteristics. These 15 regression models were limited to employees in each union categorization, controlling for pay grades and steps within each pay grade to discover if within-grade pay differences might exist between men and women or between whites and non-whites.
3. The results from step 2, identified two unions showing potential evidence of pay inequity between groups (men & women; whites & non-whites) that warranted further study for a handful of job titles within those groups.
4. We then ran regression models by job title for the two identified unions identified in earlier steps of the analysis.

Similar methods were to be applied to the data collected from the 4 comparable counties—though data from other counties was less detailed than the data from Lane County, thus these results provide less insight.

These methods complement each other well. Obtaining the median wage paints a clear picture towards trends in equity in pay, but it does not consider the employee's level of educational attainment or prior professional experience. Whereas the comparison of hourly rate to sex and ethnicity may show where inequity exists (e.g., how many men, women, white, or nonwhite employees are in lower pay ranges versus higher pay ranges), the regression model results can determine if a relationship between a person's hourly rate and their gender or race exists.

Findings

Overall, the findings of our pay equity study show no government-wide differences in wages paid to women compared to men, nor whites compared to non-whites⁴. For the 15 models (one for each union category) used in our analysis, only one of these models show statistically significant differences in either of gender or race⁵. Breaking these results down further, we find that for nearly every job in Lane County, no statistically significant differences in wages existed. Only one job title was found to have statistically and practically significant differences in pay. These results, explained in detail below, have a very limited scope, include very few employees (at most 4 in a given year), and are likely able to be explained by factors that we could not control for in our study because the needed data are not achieved electronically by Lane County.

⁴ For detailed regression results see the Appendix 1. Only models with statistically significant results are included in the appendix.

⁵ Additional analysis, not presented in this report but can be provided upon request, was done to determine if the "step" within a pay grade could be predicted by gender or race, as the "step" was a substantial driver of increasing/decreasing wage level. Our analysis shows no evidence that men are making more than women, nor whites earning more than non-whites.

In our analysis, we used separate models for each bargaining unit and each designated non-represented employee group. The choice to separate the analysis by these 15 groups was made because the starting salary for different types of employees is largely based on the bargaining process between the unions and the County. Many employees may be categorized within the same pay grade across different unions, despite doing very different kinds of work, and ultimately have different starting rates because of the union contract by which they are represented.

When we look across these 15 models, there was just one model with statistically significant results: “Professional” (one of the six non-represented groups of employees working for Lane County). With a wide variety of types of work done within this group, we were concerned that these significant results, taken in isolation, may not fully represent the nature of pay for employees represented in this group. Consequently, we further created models that broke down the group identified as “Professional” into separate models by job title—thus allowing us to examine if individuals doing the same work within each of these two unions were being paid similarly.

Only one job title in this group has a statistically significant difference, "Assist County Counsel 2." For this job title, males earn, all else held constant, 22 percent less than women. However, this finding is extremely limited in scope, in that there is only one female in this category compared to three men. Looking at the raw wage numbers, the men all make at least as much as the female employee, but because of differences in other characteristics (years of experience, for example), we see the finding that this employee is paid more. However, the limitations of the data provided to the research team do not allow us to assess if this employee has a longer work history or a higher level of educational attainment, for example, that could explain this difference in expected wages.

The assessment of this analysis, taken on the whole, provides evidence that Lane County is doing a good job to assure employees are being paid equally for like-work. The differences we did find are very limited in scope and are likely the result of information that we are unable to access. Additionally, the small sample sizes of the “Assist County Counsel 2” model limit the overall power of that model to explain the differences. Given the overall high-level of parity across the Lane County government, we feel confident in the work county employees are doing to assure equal pay to men and women and whites and non-whites.

Limitations

There are several limitations with this particular portion of the study. First, the level of analysis we have conducted, by union and job title, does not fully capture the characteristics of the employees. Most specifically, we are unable to assess how many years of work experience and years of education employees have. While we know how long these individuals have worked for Lane County, the nature of today’s workforce is one in which people do not spend a career with one employer. Lane County should establish a digital, standardized system for record-keeping of employee professional experience and level of educational attainment information to allow for a more accurate analysis in the future. This will also assist in fully complying with the Oregon Equal Pay Act of 2017, and to remain competitive as an employer.

And second, the structure of these models is not based on the same metrics as the Oregon Equal Pay Act of 2017. The complexity of human resource practices used by Lane County, and other HR departments, cannot fully be accounted for in an OLS regression given the information that is captured in the County’s employee records that were available to the research team.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Lane County does a lot of good work in developing an inviting employee culture. Employees are proud to say they work for Lane County and they feel their values align with that of their employer. Employees do not agree that gender or race wage gap exists, and the data largely supports that finding. If circumstances allowed, employees would choose to stay working for Lane County.

The question becomes, what can the county do to maintain the competitive advantage that this kind of culture generates –and to attract and retain great employees?

Recruit

Lane County employs proportionally more women in lower-paying roles than men. Much of this may be rooted in the types of jobs available and the applicant pools. However, according to a recent study, society often ignores the job segregation between men and women that still exists. Perceptions about different skills and abilities inherent to men and women emerge from cultural values and play a role in decisions about different types of employment positions (Guy, 2017). Therefore, the county should continue diversity recruitment and retention efforts, and ensure a specific focus on middle and upper management. Such tactics might include hosting a booth at the annual Urban League career fair each spring; conducting recruitment fairs in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians; hosting a "women in business" conference and recruitment fair, etc. Another recommendation is to consider emotive skills alongside cognitive skills and even include such aspects in job descriptions. This inclusion can help because, "essentializing emotive responses to a binary choice of masculine or feminine shortchanges the skills of many and avoids a more fulsome and nuanced approach to public service delivery" (Guy, 2017). This may help to eliminate culturally common perceptions concerning appropriate positions held by men and women and job segregation between sexes.

Simplify

It cannot be said enough: Lane County uses too many job classifications. Employment law may make such a practice politically desirable, but in the climate of "Me Too," it may be such a cumbersome system that its usefulness diminishes. Simplify and standardize job classifications as well as the collection of professional experience and education information. Competitive advantage in the age of Glass Door and LinkedIn is transparency and authenticity. Ensure Lane County demonstrates transparency and those true comparisons are possible. An independent salary audit is one step in this direction to help with compliance with the Oregon Equal Pay Act. The Policy Lab can also be a source to evaluate specific classifications and identify best practices within the public sector in the future. Engaging with ELGL (Engaging Local Government Leaders), a professional association for public sector employees, can also help identify opportunities for simplification by networking with others in the field.

Refine

Employees made it clear that they would appreciate Lane County adopting some of the current trends in flexible scheduling, including opportunities to work from home or remotely and to have more flexible working hours. Such efforts could encourage more women and people of color, traditionally caregivers who often need the flexibility to tend to family needs, to apply for higher-level positions.

The recent agreement with FOPPO (Federation of Oregon Parole and Probation Officers) outlines means for members of that union to request a flexible schedule, essentially leaving the decision to the discretion of the supervisor. Other collective bargaining agreements limit requests for flexible scheduling to coincide with job-related training. There is an opportunity for Lane County to refine these policies and practices to offer more flexibility and gain competitive advantage. The current strategic plan, in consideration of employee demographics and engagement trends, lends to such a change.

Plan

Lane County sits in a positive position with an equitable pay structure overall. Our analysis shows that Lane County is ahead of national trends, and the County should seek to retain that advantage. With the passage of the Oregon Equal Pay Act of 2017, the County should consider expanding data collection about existing and future employees to better position them to offer competitive and commiserate salary based on the experience of employees beyond those years worked within the Lane County government. The types of data that should be collected and digitized are educational and work history in particular, this allows easier comparisons between job candidates and current employees. It is clear that younger cohorts of employees will likely not stay with employers as long as past generations. This means the better the data is on how and why the County pays current employees what it pays them, it will place them in a better position to comply with HB 2005, while offering competitive wages to new hires. This will require a greater investment in database systems for human resources.

Appendix 1

Regression Models

Models: GLS Random-Effects Models with the log of hourly rate as the dependent variable

	Professional	Assist County Counsel 2
Males	0.0516 (***)	-0.224 (***)
Reported White Alone as Ethnicity/Race	-0.0202	-0.0431
Step (within grade)	0.00204 (***)	0.00353
Age	0.00213 (***)	0.00463
Years of Service for Lane County	0.00892 (***)	0.0496 (***)
Full-Time Employee	0.0283	
Year Trend	0.0247 (***)	0.00170 (***)
Controls for Pay Grade and Job Title are included		
Constant	-46.20 (***)	
Observations	199	18
Number of employees	70	4
aster in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1		

Robust standard errors are used in all models because of the presence of heteroskedasticity.

Comparable Counties

County	Employees	Gender	Race
Marion	1,639	57 percent female 43 percent male	66 percent white 12 percent non-white 22 percent unspecified
Deschutes	1,074	54 percent female 46 percent male	TBD
Clackamas	2,382	52 percent female 48 percent male	85 percent white 12 percent non-white 3 percent unspecified
Jackson	809	49 percent female 51 percent male	90 percent white 10 percent non-white
Lane	2,083	55 percent female 45 percent male	83 percent white 14 percent non-white 3 percent unspecified

Appendix 2

A note regarding variable recoding

There were a few variables which required editing for the ease of analysis. For example, because Lane County employees may identify as several racial and ethnic identities, ethnic codes were simplified to “white” and “non-white.” This makes comparing pay easier, (2 categories compared to as many as 26), and it also increases the likelihood that there are enough observations to provide an accurate measure (i.e., there are more employees in three categories than as many as 26). However, it should be noted that this method does not make it easy for stakeholders to identify disparities affecting specific races or ethnicities.

In regression models it is important that the dependent (or outcome) variable have a normal distribution of observations to assure an unbiased estimator—basically, the math that is running underneath the hood of the statistical models need these data to be arranged in a particular way to calculate accurate estimates. In our case the hourly rate employees earn is not normally distributed—in that most people are clumped on the left or lower end of the distribution, with a few observations (higher paid employees) showing up on the higher end of the distribution. If we rely upon hourly rates in our regressions we may end up with estimates that are biased. Consequently, we calculate the natural log of the hourly rates to normalize the hourly rate—a common practice in statistics to get around this problem—to get better estimates of the impact of our independent variables on our dependent variable.

To group employees into “like” groups, the team used the union and job title, coupled with controls for pay grades and the pay steps within each grade to control for like positions. This results in employees working in similarly compensated jobs to be compared, even if their jobs may be quite different. Models used people working in the same group (union) to create an analysis that would more accurately compare like-work to like-work.