



Fire Classification Market Study Findings & Recommendations

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3/9/26 Committee of the Whole



Discussion Topics

- Overview
- Components of the Analysis
- Findings & Observations
- Budget Analysis
- Recommendations

Overview



- Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC) conducted the classification and compensation study for certified Fire Department positions and Benefits Survey

- Labor Market comparisons included:

Apex	Forsyth County	Kannapolis
Asheville	Gastonia	Kernersville
Burlington	Greensboro	Mooresville
Cary	Greenville	Raleigh
Charlotte	High Point	Wake Forest
Concord	Huntersville	Wilmington
City of Durham		



Components of the Analysis

Salary Range Analysis

- Minimum to Maximum salaries available for each position and pay grade

Actual Salary Analysis

- Comparing average actual salaries for each position to the average actual salaries for the 19 comparable agencies

Benefits Survey

At implementation, adjusting ranges and adjusting salaries are handled independently of one another.

Findings & Observations



Current Fire Pay Plan

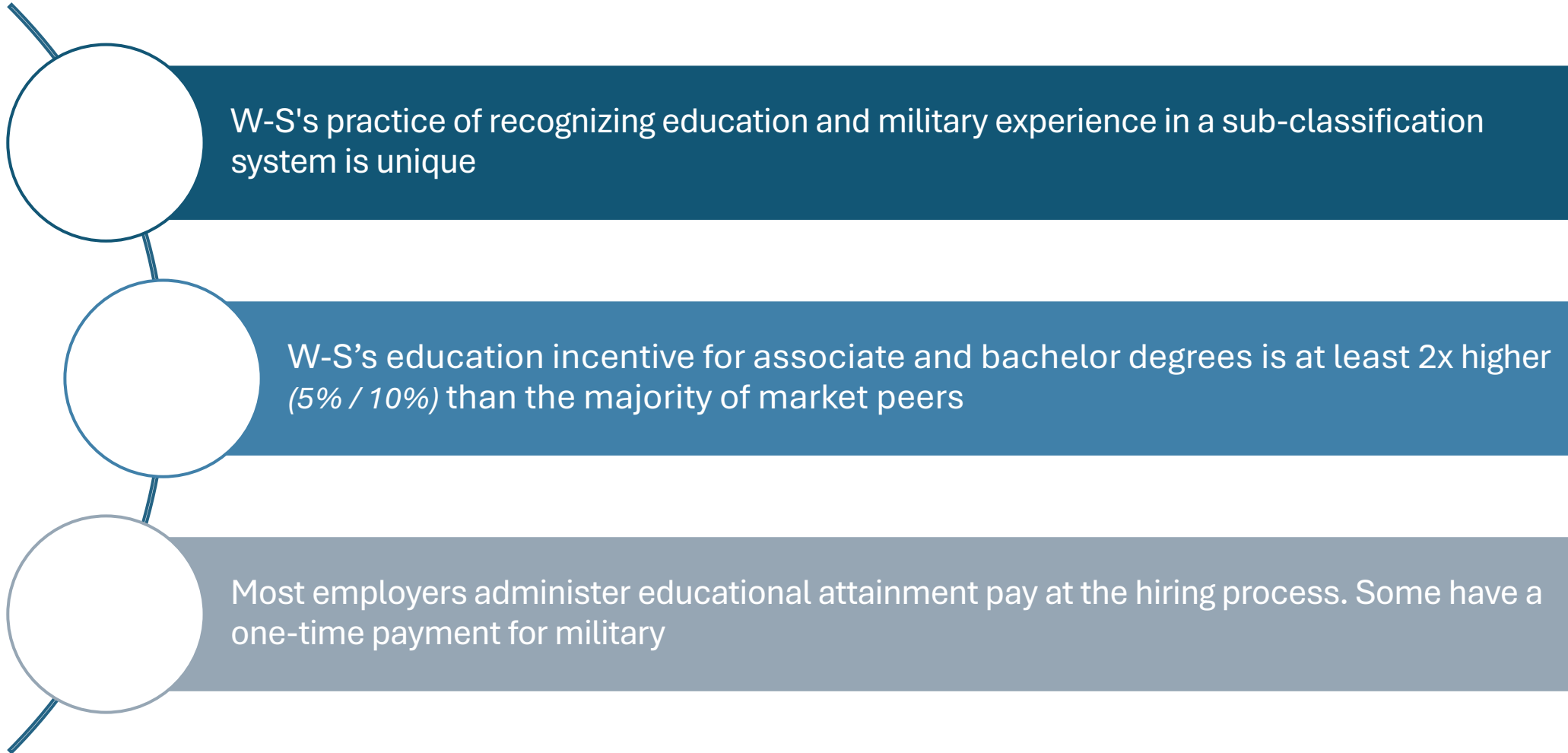
JOB CODE	CLASSIFICATION TITLE	HOURS	GRADE	NO DEGREE			ASSOCIATES			BACHELORS+		
				MIN	+MILITARY	MAX	MIN	+MILITARY	MAX	MIN	+MILITARY	MAX
466	FIREFIGHTER RECRUIT	40	101	44,741	46,978	67,112	46,978	49,327	70,468	49,327	51,794	73,991
464	FIREFIGHER I	56	102	46,978	49,327	70,468	49,327	51,794	73,991	51,794	54,383	77,690
734	FIREFIGHER II	56	103	49,327	51,794	73,991	51,794	54,383	77,690	54,383	57,103	81,575
735	MASTER FIREFIGHTER	56	105	54,383	57,103	81,575	57,103	59,958	85,653	59,958	62,955	89,936
1023	FIRE ENGINEER - ADMIN (40)	40	106	57,103	59,958	85,653	59,958	62,955	89,936	62,955	66,103	94,433
462	FIRE ENGINEER (56)	56	106	57,103	59,958	85,653	59,958	62,955	89,936	62,955	66,103	94,433
465	FIRE INSPECTOR (40)	40	106	57,103	59,958	85,653	59,958	62,955	89,936	62,955	66,103	94,433
372	RISK REDUCTION SPECIALIST	40	106	57,103	59,958	85,653	59,958	62,955	89,936	62,955	66,103	94,433
256	ASSISTANT FIRE MARSHAL (40)	40	109	66,103	69,408	99,155	69,408	72,879	104,112	72,879	76,522	109,319
410	ASSISTANT FIRE MARSHAL (56)	56	109	66,103	69,408	99,155	69,408	72,879	104,112	72,879	76,522	109,319
148	FIRE CAPTAIN - ADMIN (40)	40	110	69,408	72,879	104,112	72,879	76,522	109,319	76,522	80,348	114,784
146	FIRE CAPTAIN (56)	56	110	69,408	72,879	104,112	72,879	76,522	109,319	76,522	80,348	114,784
631	SHIFT SAFETY & TRAINING OFFICER	56	110	69,408	72,879	104,112	72,879	76,522	109,319	76,522	80,348	114,784
132	BATT FIRE CHIEF - ADMIN (40)	40	112	76,522	80,348	114,784	80,348	84,366	120,523	84,366	88,585	126,549
133	BATTALION FIRE CHIEF (56)	56	112	76,522	80,348	114,784	80,348	84,366	120,523	84,366	88,585	126,549
21	DEPUTY FIRE MARSHAL	40	114	84,366	88,585	126,549	88,585	93,014	132,876	93,014	97,664	139,521

Current pay plan reflects 3 separate tiers based on education and military experience

PTRC's Findings

- Military experience and educational attainment is recognized independent of classification, and most often at initial recruitment.
- The range of minimum to maximum salaries within each pay grade is more constrained at other organizations (*meaning it takes longer to reach the top of the pay range at WSFD than it does at other fire departments*).
- There was a larger discrepancy in salary ranges than average actual salaries.

Findings of Hiring Practices Survey



Classification	Range Min	Range Max	Range %	Compared to Market
Firefighter I	\$46,978	\$77,690	65	Current Range
Market	\$50,643	\$74,444	47	Range min: 7% below market
Recommendation	\$51,000	\$79,050	55	Range min: 1% above market Range max: 6% above market
Fire Engineer	\$57,103	\$94,433	65	Current Range
Market	\$59,723	\$91,875	54	Range min: 4% below market
Recommendation	\$61,991	\$96,086	55	Range min: 4% above market Range max: 5% above market
Fire Captain	\$69,408	\$114,784	65	Current Range
Market	\$73,878	\$111,203	51	Range min: 6% below market
Recommendation	\$75,350	\$116,793	55	Range min: 2% above market Range max: 5% above market
Battalion Chief	\$76,522	\$126,549	65	Current Range
Market	\$86,293	\$133,915	55	Range min: 11% below market
Recommendation	\$87,227	\$135,202	55	Range min: 1% above market Range max: 1% above market

Market Analysis

The average of WSFD’s Firefighter I actual salaries are ~4% below actual market average.

The average of WSFD’s Engineer actual salaries are ~2% below actual market average.

The average of WSFD’s Captain actual salaries are ~1% below actual market average.

The average of WSFD’s Battalion Chief actual salaries are 5% above actual market average.

Percents are rounded to the nearest whole number

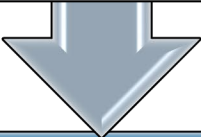
Summary of Market Position – Actual WSFD Salaries

	Current Range Minimum as % of Market		Proposed Range Minimum as % of Market	Proposed Range Maximum as % of Market	Actual Salaries as % of Mkt Avg
Firefighter I	93%	↑ 8%	101%	106%	96%
Fire Engineer	96%	↑ 8%	104%	105%	98%
Fire Captain	94%	↑ 8%	102%	105%	99%
Battalion Chief	89%	↑ 12%	101%	101%	105%

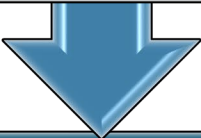
Average actual salaries for WSFD are ~ 2.2 % below the average salaries for market comparables, with the largest variance at the entry level Firefighter rank.

Summary of Benefits Survey

5 of 19 Respondents				
Town of Apex	City of High Point	City of Gastonia	Town of Wake Forest	Town of Mooresville



W-S Non Competitive Benefits		
No standalone Bereavement Policy	Only respondent with 60-mile residency requirement	No contribution to 401k and 457 plans for non-law enforcement employees



W-S Offers Competitive Benefits					
Employee / Employer Monthly Contributions	401a Employer Contribution: 2%	Group Life: up to 3x salary	529 College Savings Plan	Retention Bonus	Tuition Reimbursement: 42% above market average

Budget Analysis



Annualized Budget Impact Analysis Based on Provided Data

- Total Annualized Cost of \$1.96 Million for Salary and Benefits
- Represents a 4.4% Increase to Total FY 26 Fire Department Staffing Costs
- Individual Increases Range from 4.32% to 9.53%

POSITION	# OF CURRENT EMPLOYEES	TOTAL SALARY ADJUSTMENTS	AVERAGE SALARY ADJUSTMENT
FIREFIGHTER (I, II, MASTER, TRAINEE)	204	\$525,449	\$2,576
FIRE CAPTAIN	71	275,992	3,887
FIRE ENGINEER	63	194,437	3,086
BATTALION CHIEF	11	116,709	10,610
ASST FIRE MARSHAL	8	29,736	3,717
FIRE INSPECTOR	7	20,634	2,948
DEPUTY FIRE MARSHAL	2	9,666	4,833
RISK REDUCTION SPECIALIST	1	2,822	2,822
TOTAL	367	\$1,175,445	\$3,203
<i>Add Benefits</i>		<i>\$534,945</i>	
TOTAL COST W/ BENEFITS*		\$1,964,385	
<i>*Includes overtime adjustment</i>			

Class Title	Grade	Min	Mid	Max
Firefighter Recruit	101	\$48,571	\$61,929	\$75,286
Firefighter I	102	\$51,000	\$65,025	\$79,050
Firefighter II	103	\$53,550	\$68,276	\$83,003
Future Placeholder	104	\$56,228	\$71,690	\$87,153
Master Firefighter	105	\$59,039	\$75,275	\$91,510
Fire Engineer, Fire Inspector, Risk Reduction Specialist	106	\$61,991	\$79,038	\$96,086
Future Placeholder	107	\$65,090	\$82,990	\$100,890
Future Placeholder	108	\$68,345	\$87,140	\$105,935
Assistant Fire Marshal	109	\$71,762	\$91,497	\$111,231
Fire Captain				
Shift Safety & Training Officer	110	\$75,350	\$96,072	\$116,793
Future Placeholder	111	\$79,118	\$100,875	\$122,632
Future Placeholder	112	\$83,074	\$105,919	\$128,764
Battalion Chief	113	\$87,227	\$111,215	\$135,202
Deputy Fire Marshal	114	\$91,589	\$116,776	\$141,962
Future Placeholder	115	\$96,168	\$122,614	\$149,061

Proposed Fire Pay Plan

Assumptions:

- ❖ 5% increase between pay grades
- ❖ Range maximums are 55% higher than the range minimums
- ❖ With exception of Battalion Chiefs, all other positions remain in their current pay grades. *(Battalion Chiefs increase from grade 112 to 113 based on the market average).*

EXAMPLE: Fire Captain Earning Potential

Current Pay Plan

CLASS TITLE	GRADE	NO DEGREE			ASSOCIATES			BACHELORS+		
		MIN	+MILITARY	MAX	MIN	+MILITARY	MAX	MIN	+MILITARY	MAX
FIRE CAPTAIN	110	69,408	72,879	104,112	72,879	76,522	109,319	76,522	80,348	114,784

Captain with high school degree with or without military experience: Max earning potential is \$104,112

Proposed Pay Plan

Class Title	Grade	Min	Mid	Max
Fire Captain	110	\$75,350	\$96,072	\$116,793

Captain with high school diploma and no military experience: Max earning potential \$116,793

Recommendations & Implementation



Implementation Recommendations

- Employees will receive a salary increase to either raise their salary to the minimum of the new pay grade, or maintain their salary ratio to the mid-point of the pay range
- Remove sub-classification system for education and military from the Fire Pay Plan
- Adjust education incentive to align with majority of market peers
 - Current employees will retain their existing incentive amounts
 - Current employees will continue to receive the current incentive for degrees awarded prior to 6/30/2032

Education Attainment	Current Education Incentive	Proposed Education Incentive
Associates degree	5%	2.5%
Max incentive for Bachelor's or higher	10%	5%

- Remain above market average by adjusting military incentive from 5% to 3.5% of base pay
- Revisit residency requirement at a future date

Cost Implications

Financial Impact

- Annualized fiscal impact of \$1.96 million for salary and benefits
- Recommend implementation prior to July 1, 2026

Future Consideration

- Sets precedent for future classification and compensation studies

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