

## CERTIFICATION INCENTIVE POLICY

### **Purpose/Objective**

Cook County believes that employees who receive certifications and licenses that directly relate to their jobs are able to perform their duties more efficiently and capably than their uncertified and unlicensed colleagues. As a result, the county desires to create a framework that creates an economic incentive for employees to acquire such certifications and licenses.

### **Definitions**

*Approved certifications and licenses* and *Approved certifications and/or licenses* mean those current and valid job relevant certifications and licenses that are identified in Section I of this Policy.

*Artificial lapse* or *Artificially lapsed* means when an approved certification and/or license ceases to be valid prior to its natural expiration date.

*Eligible individuals* mean those employees who possess approved certifications and licenses relevant to the eligible positions they occupy.

*Eligible positions* mean those positions identified in Section I of this Policy eligible for incentive compensation.

*Formerly eligible individuals* mean those employees currently occupying eligible positions whose approved certifications and/or licenses have artificially lapsed. An individual whose incentive compensation is based on holding multiple approved certifications and/or licenses attains the status of formerly eligible individual upon the artificial lapse of at least one of those approved certifications and/or licenses.

*Incentive compensation* means the additional compensation paid to eligible individuals employed in eligible positions pursuant to this Policy.

*Non-eligible certifications and licenses* mean those certifications and licenses that are identified as essential job requirements. For example, a CDL is a non-eligible certification and license for any position requiring the attainment and maintenance of a CDL.

*Other certifications and licenses* mean all certifications and licenses other than (1) approved certifications and licenses and (2) non-eligible certifications and licenses.

*Successor employee* means an individual who is hired, promoted or transferred to an eligible position.

The singular form of the above defined words when used throughout this Policy shall have the same meaning assigned to the plural form.

**I. Approved Certifications and Licenses**

A. The certifications and licenses listed in the below table are deemed by the county to be job relevant certifications and licenses for the identified eligible positions. Eligible individuals will be entitled to the incentive compensation associated with their eligible positions upon presenting to the County Administrator definitive proof of attainment of the approved certifications and licenses in addition to the expiration date(s) of those certification(s) and/or license(s).

Certifications and Licenses	Eligible Positions	Amount of Incentive Compensation (annual)

B. Once an eligible individual has tendered definitive proof of attainment of the approved certifications and licenses in addition to the expiration date(s) of the certification(s) and/or license(s), the County Administrator shall ensure that the eligible individual is paid the applicable incentive compensation until the earlier of the employee vacating the eligible position or the expiration (natural or otherwise) of the employee's certification(s) and/or license(s).



C. Because the County Administrator is obligated to cease paying incentive compensation upon the expiration of the most current certification(s) and/or license(s) on file, it is the eligible individual's obligation to ensure that new certification(s) and/or license(s) are on file prior to the expiration of any previously submitted certification(s) and/or license(s). An eligible individual who fails to ensure that current certifications/licenses are on file shall not be entitled to any retroactive incentive compensation for any pay period during which current certifications/licenses were not on file.

## **II. Payment of Incentive Compensation**

A. Eligible individuals who hold approved certifications and licenses as of the first day of the county's fiscal year shall be paid the incentive compensation on a pro rata basis each pay period throughout the fiscal year.

B. Eligible individuals who attain their approved certifications and licenses in the middle of a fiscal year shall not receive incentive compensation until the first pay period of the next fiscal year.

C. A successor employee who holds one or more approved certifications and licenses upon commencing work in an eligible position shall not receive incentive compensation until the first pay period of the next fiscal year.

## **III. Nature of Incentive Compensation**

A. Incentive compensation is a compensation supplement that belongs to the eligible individual. Under no circumstances shall incentive compensation become part of the base pay of an eligible position.

B. Successor employees shall not be entitled to their predecessors' incentive compensation. A successor employee shall only be entitled to incentive compensation to the extent that the employee has one or more approved certifications and licenses relevant to the eligible position occupied by the successor employee.

C. The County Administrator shall ensure that an appropriate notation is included in each eligible individual's personnel file reflecting the amount and basis of the incentive compensation paid to the eligible individual. Copies of any and all approved certifications and licenses supporting the incentive compensation shall also be placed in each eligible individual's personnel file after appropriate redaction (if necessary).

## **IV. Maximum amount of Incentive Compensation**

No eligible individual shall receive more than \$\_\_\_\_\_ in incentive compensation per fiscal year regardless of the number of approved certifications and licenses held by that eligible individual.

## **V. Other Certifications and Licenses**

A. From time to time and when appropriate, the County Administrator shall recommend to the Board of Commissioners other certifications and licenses for inclusion in the approved certifications and licenses category. For each certification and license so recommended, the County Administrator shall propose an appropriate amount of incentive compensation taking into account the number of hours necessary to attain the certification and/or license, the value of the certification and/or license from the perspective of county government and the taxpayers, and the current incentive compensation paid for comparable approved certifications and licenses, if any.

B. Under no circumstances shall the County Administrator recommend non-eligible certifications and licenses for inclusion in the approved certifications and licenses category.

## **VI. Obligations of formerly eligible individuals**

A. A formerly eligible individual is obligated to timely inform the County Administrator of an artificial lapse of any approved certifications and licenses that form the basis of the employee's incentive compensation. For purposes of this policy, "timely inform" shall mean prior to the next pay period following the occurrence of the artificial lapse or within five (5) business days of the occurrence of the artificial lapse, whichever last occurs.

B. A formerly eligible individual's failure to timely notify the County Administrator of an artificial lapse may result in immediate discharge consistent with the Cook County Procedures and Policy Manual.

C. Within thirty (30) days of receipt, formerly eligible individuals are obligated to reimburse to the county all incentive compensation paid to them while they have the status of formerly eligible individuals. This reimbursement obligation shall arise anew with each pay period, and a failure to timely reimburse incentive compensation shall constitute a separate and distinct violation for each pay period. Nonetheless, a single violation may result in immediate discharge consistent with the Cook County Procedures and Policy Manual.

D. If a formerly eligible individual's incentive compensation is based on holding multiple approved certifications and/or licenses and at least one of those approved certifications and/or licenses remains valid, the formerly eligible individual shall only be obligated to timely reimburse the portion of the incentive compensation that is attributable to the certifications and/or licenses that artificially lapsed.

**VII. Effective Date**

A. This Policy shall become effective on the first pay period occurring after the commencement of the county's next fiscal year.

B. All compensation supplements based on certifications and licenses currently in effect shall irrevocably cease upon the expiration of the county's current fiscal year.