

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL – RFP
Whatcom County Library System
Classification and Compensation Study
2026

Issuing Agency: Whatcom County Library System

Released: March 2, 2026

Closes: March 24, 2026

Proposals must be received no later than 5:00pm PST.

RFP Contact:

Whatcom County Library System

Attn: RFP – 2026 Classification and Compensation Study

c/o Jackie Saul, Director of Finance and Administration

5205 Northwest Drive

Bellingham, WA 98225

Email: jackie.saul@wcls.org

INTRODUCTION

Whatcom County Library System (WCLS) is soliciting proposals for consulting services to conduct a systemwide Classification and Compensation Study in 2026 as described herein.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

WCLS intends to engage an outside consultant to do a market study to compare wages for all positions against the market. The consultant will present recommendations based on analysis that supports the implementation of the proposal. All data, raw and summarized, will be provided to WCLS.

WCLS is particularly interested in addressing the following: livable wages that address local cost of living and home prices, the impacts of Washington State minimum wage increases on wage compression over time, compensation for bilingual employees, and options for long-term employees at the top of their pay range.

Consultants will also review WCLS's existing Classification and Compensation structure and job audit process and suggest improvements.

BACKGROUND

Whatcom County Library System is a junior taxing district established in 1944. It is a rural library district serving Whatcom County, Washington. WCLS is governed by a five-person Board of Trustees; the position of Executive Director is selected by the Board. WCLS served an estimated population of 142,160 in 2025.

The WCLS service area includes all unincorporated areas of Whatcom County, Washington and six annexed cities and towns, with the exception of the City of Bellingham. Whatcom County's economy is made up of government, healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, manufacturing, accommodation

and food service sectors, with the private sector comprising approximately 80% of local jobs. Jobs in agriculture and petroleum refinement are notable in county areas, outside of city limits.

Whatcom County Library System provides services at ten branch libraries, a bookmobile, homebound services, outreach, and its website. WCLS has 169 employees, including adjunct and system subs. The number of employees with regularly budgeted hours is 150. WCLS has 83 Full Time Equivalents (FTE). The workforce is made up of full and part-time employees, at managerial and non-managerial levels (see Attachment A, Organizational Chart). Sixty-one staff members are represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union. Positions are professional, paraprofessional, technical, clerical and service in nature. The existing salary structure is the result of a classification and compensation study conducted in 2017.

Currently, salaries are adjusted annually with a negotiated Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), based on local employment and inflation statistics and within budgetary limitations. Individual raises may occur as a result of a Proficiency Increase (PI) at the time of an employee's successful annual performance review. The rate of the annual PI is standard across employees and is determined during the annual bargaining process.

The existing salary structure is made up of 30 pay levels (see Attachment B). The Executive Director's salary is set by the Board of Trustees. All WCLS positions are placed within the structure based on internal equity and market pricing. Since 2003, WCLS has reviewed and updated job descriptions as needed and in conjunction with ongoing business operations, reorganizations, and additional job assignments. WCLS seeks to review the existing classification and compensation system to ensure it continues to support and align WCLS's staffing resources with its current and anticipated business needs.

SCOPE OF WORK

This project shall include, but is not limited to the following activities:

- 1) Meet with Classification and Compensation Study Committee a minimum of four (4) times throughout the study.
- 2) Review the existing Classification and Compensation system
 - a. Understand pay levels, pay ranges, COLAs and Proficiency Increases and union relationship.
 - b. Review process for classifying new positions and re-classifying existing positions.
 - c. Review current job descriptions for all existing job titles.
 - d. Interview select employees to understand job duties and responsibilities for uncommon positions.
 - e. Analyze the percentage between pay levels (currently 5% at the midpoint) and the width of pay ranges (currently 0%-30% for pay levels 1 – 3 and 40% for all others).
 - f. Review Classification structure for internal equity.
- 3) Survey Market Competitors

- a. Gather wage data for 56 positions (Attachment B) and compare versus a minimum of 12 comparable organizations within the State of Washington, or as mutually determined by the Classification Committee and the Consultant. These should include:
 - i. Libraries, including those of similar size and budget.
 - ii. Other libraries in Whatcom County
 - iii. Other local governments, school districts and not-for-profit organizations in Whatcom County
 - iv. For-profit businesses
 - b. Confirm position matches by comparing job duties in addition to job titles.
 - c. Analyze how other organizations compensate for bilingual skills and how they address employees at the far edge of their pay range, as well as how the organizations address pay increases.
 - d. Limited scope analysis of medical benefits offered as agreed by consultant and committee.
- 4) Analyze local market factors as agreed by consultant and committee, and propose methodology to adjust pay rates to account for these factors if necessary.
 - 5) Propose Recommendations to Update Classification & Compensation Structure and Pay Rates
 - a. Propose pay level adjustments for positions that are not aligned with market.
 - b. Propose adjustments to Classification & Compensation structure, if any.
 - c. Develop estimate of financial impact to implement recommendations.
 - d. Suggest options for implementing the changes over time, with 12 to 24-month horizons beginning in 2027.
 - e. Develop a Communication Plan for project implementation.
 - 6) Refine the process for maintaining the classification and compensation structure to ensure future integrity of the structure.
 - a. Provide recommendations for how the job classification audit process and assessment tool could be improved, if appropriate.
 - 7) Present a final report to the WCLS Board of Trustees at their August 18, 2026 meeting.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Each proposal should be organized to clearly address the following requirements, at a minimum:

A. Agents and Address

List the full name, address and telephone numbers of your firm, and, if applicable, of the office from which the services are to be provided. Designate the person to serve as project manager and list the name or names of the persons in your firm authorized to negotiate the proposed contract associated with this RFP. Provide resumes summarizing the qualifications and experience of the individuals who will be participating in the study.

B. Statement of Methods and Procedures

Provide a statement describing the Scope of Work as you understand it, and describe the approach, means, methods and procedures to be employed to gather the data, analyze findings, develop recommendations and coordinate implementation as requested.

C. Structure and Content of Work Product

Describe the way in which the work product will be structured and presented upon completion. Include computer and software compatibility information.

D. Project Timetable

Provide the anticipated start and completion date for the project and estimated dates for the fulfillment of each work task. This proposed project timetable will be used as the basis for the project timetable to be included in the project contract. WCLS anticipates that the successful consultant will be able to begin this project on or before April 22, 2026 and submit final recommendations and implementation guidelines on or before August 3, 2026. Consultant will present final recommendations and implementation guidelines to WCLS Board of Trustees on August 18, 2026.

E. References

All proposals should include a list of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of at least five (5) local government references of the same or larger size and complexity as WCLS who will attest to the successful completion and implementation of a classification and compensation study by your firm during the past five (5) years.

F. Additional Information

The Consultant may include any additional information that is believed to be pertinent and helpful but not specifically requested elsewhere in this RFP.

G. Fee Proposal

The fee proposal and project budget shall be sealed in a separate envelope labeled 'FEE PROPOSAL' and included with the proposal document. The fee proposal will not be opened until after other factors have been considered. The fee should include:

- i. A total cost estimate and not to exceed amount for the work described under Scope of Work. The price must contain all executive, professional, technical and clerical fees

(whether for employees of the firm or for associated independent contractors), all travel and related costs, all production costs (including charges for office equipment usage and consumable supplies), all communications costs (including telephone charges), all other direct and indirect costs, all overhead and all profit;

- ii. A rate schedule for computing any extra work not specified in the contracted Scope of Work, including hourly rates for all positions plus unit costs for incidental expenses; and
- iii. Amount to be deducted from total cost estimate because Consultant is conducting (or has conducted in the past six months) salary surveys of comparable jurisdictions/positions, the data from which can be shared rather than independently gathered.

It shall be the Consultant's responsibility to determine the costs of any state and local taxes and business license fees associated with conducting this study and to include the cost of such items in the project budget and fee proposal.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Five (5) identical copies of the proposal shall be addressed to WCLS as follows:

Whatcom County Library System
Attn: Beth Andrews, HR Manager
5205 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226

They should be received at the above address by 5:00 p.m. PST on Tuesday, March 24, 2026. Although proposals may be opened and reviewed prior to the closing date, they will not be disclosed to competing firms or the public until after contract award. Such award will not necessarily be based on the lowest maximum fee proposed.

Proposals must be signed by representatives of the consulting firm who have the authority to bind the consulting firm to its provisions. The proposal or a letter accompanying the proposal must state that the proposal remains valid for a period of at least sixty (60) days.

WCLS reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and waive any informality as may occur in the proposal process.

RFP SCHEDULE

WCLS will follow a schedule, which should result in the selection of a consulting firm to begin work on the Classification and Compensation study April 22, 2026.

March 2, 2026	RFP released
March 16, 2026	RFP Inquiries Due
March 24, 2026	Submittals due 5:00 pm PST
March 30, 2026	Review of proposals
April 3, 2026	Notify selected finalists
April 8 - April 10, 2026	Interviews & References if Needed
April 22, 2026	Award and Sign Contract
April 22, 2026	Contract Start Date
August 3, 2026	Submit Findings and Recommendations
August 18, 2026	Present to Board of Trustees

AWARD CRITERIA

All responsive proposals will be evaluated, ranked and rated according to the criteria stated below. WCLS may select a short list of highest ranked offerors with which to hold additional discussions and evaluation within the award criteria. The discussions may include, but are not limited to, presentations, qualifications, proposals, cost estimates or other pertinent information. The proposal review committee may permit revisions to the proposals so long as all offerors who are selected for additional discussion are given equal opportunity to revise their proposals.

- A. Experience and Capability: Respondents will be evaluated on past performance as reflected by evaluation of WCLS and other previous clients of the respondent with respect to such factors as quality of work and success in meeting deadlines. Additional factors to be strongly considered include experience working with libraries or other public sector organizations and knowledge of Washington State labor and minimum wage laws. (40%)
- B. Project Cost: Total project cost will be an important consideration in the selection, although it will not be the sole determining factor. (25%)
- C. Project Approach: Respondents will be evaluated as to their understanding of the scope of work, how well the proposal addresses the project requirements, and the completeness and innovation evident in the approach to the project and the proposed work. Availability for onsite consultation will be considered. (25%)
- D. Other Value-Added Tools and Services: Responses will be evaluated on the inclusion of other related information that will produce a better project outcome. (10%)

CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING THE RFP

All questions or requests for information should be submitted in writing to Jackie Saul at jackie.saul@wcls.org. WCLS reserves the right to share answers with other proposers if it is determined that the answers would give unfair advantage to one proposer.

All correspondence regarding this RFP must be in writing. It is an explicit provision of this Request for Proposal that any oral communication is not binding on WCLS's proposal process or award of the contract.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- 1) WCLS reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, as well as to waive minor irregularities in any proposal.
- 2) WCLS reserves the right to request clarification of information submitted and request additional information from the service provider.
- 3) WCLS reserves the right to modify the frequency and/or scope of services for each item within the RFP up until March 16, 2026.
- 4) WCLS reserves the right to award any contract to the next most qualified contractor, if the selected contractor does not execute the contract within thirty (30) days after the contract was awarded.
- 5) The proposal shall include those prices necessary to cover the cost of all items required to perform the work as set forth in the RFP documents. No allowance of any kind whatsoever will be made to any proposal because of lack of such examination or knowledge. The submission of a proposal shall be conclusive evidence that the proposer has made such an examination.
- 6) Any proposal may be withdrawn up until the date and time set forth above for the RFP proposals due date and time. Any RFP not so timely withdrawn shall constitute an irrevocable offer, for a period of ninety (90) days to sell to WCLS the services described in the attached specifications, or until one or more of the proposals have been approved by WCLS administration, whichever occurs first.
- 7) WCLS shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by the firm in preparing, submitting or presenting its response to this RFP.
- 8) WCLS reserves the right to make, at any time during the Contract, such changes in the Work as WCLS deems necessary for budgetary, operational, or other reasons. Such changes shall be made by reducing or eliminating portions of the Scope of Services as submitted by the Contractor with its Proposal and by reducing the Contractor's compensation commensurately. WCLS shall give the Contractor thirty (30) days' notice of any such changes in Work.

ATTACHMENTS

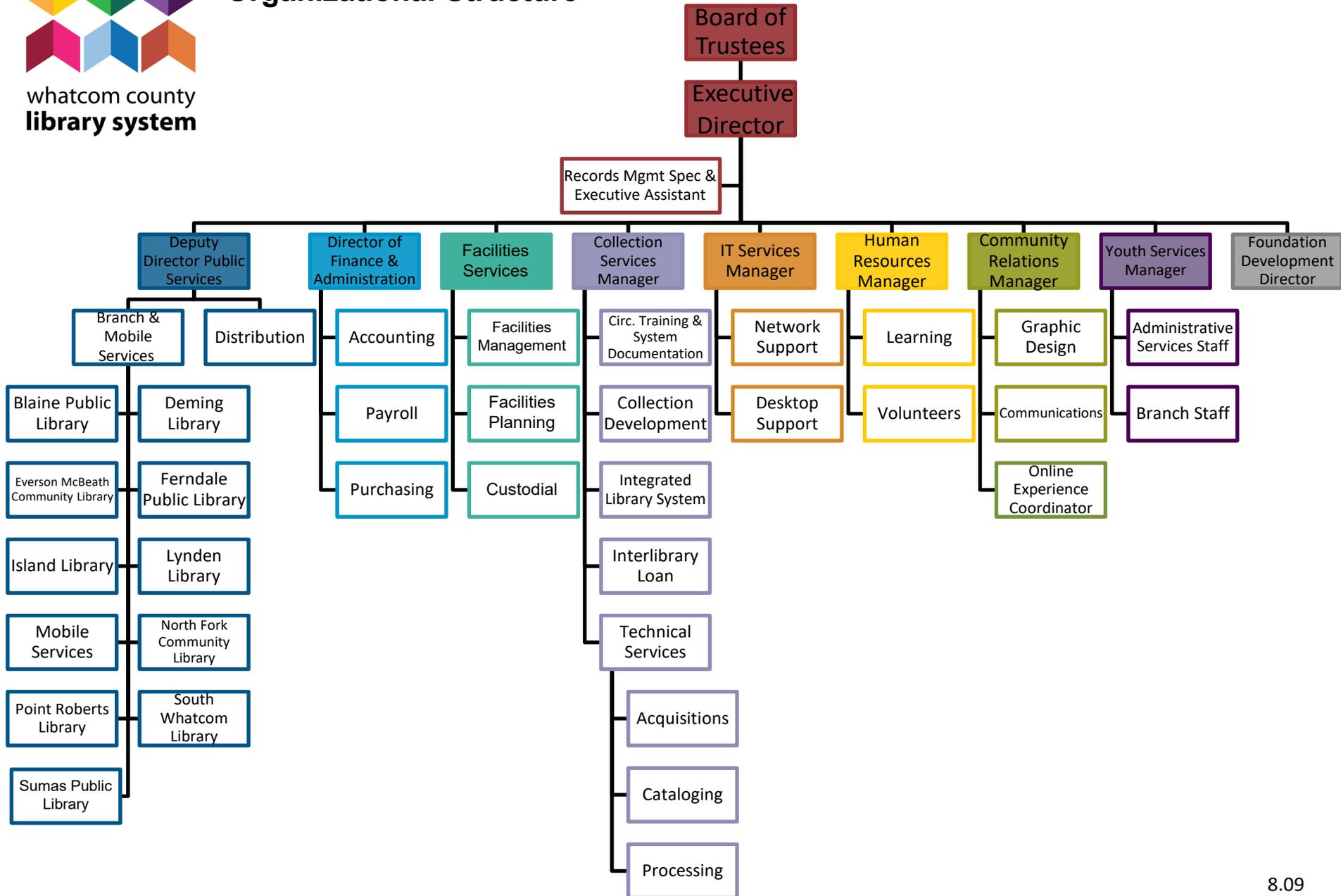
The following attachments are provided for use by responders in preparing their proposals and estimating performance costs:

Attachment A Copy of existing organizational chart
Attachment B Copy of an existing salary structure
Attachment C Copy of an existing staff list by departments
Attachment D Copy of Current Compensation Philosophy



Organizational Structure

whatcom county
library system



2026 WCLS Salary Structure Effective 01/01/2026

Pay Level	Job Title	Beginning Rate	Midpoint	Maximum Rate
1	Intern	\$ 17.1300	\$ 17.1300	\$ 17.1300
2	Page	\$ 17.2479	\$ 19.8352	\$ 22.4225
3	Administrative Services Aide	\$ 18.1114	\$ 20.8282	\$ 23.5449
	Collection Services Aide	\$ 18.1114	\$ 20.8282	\$ 23.5449
4	Vacant	\$ 18.6155	\$ 21.8732	\$ 25.1309
5	Custodian	\$ 19.1343	\$ 22.9637	\$ 26.7931
	Public Services Clerk	\$ 19.1343	\$ 22.9637	\$ 26.7931
6	Distribution Assistant - Driver	\$ 20.0947	\$ 24.1125	\$ 28.1302
	Processing Specialist	\$ 20.0947	\$ 24.1125	\$ 28.1302
	Public Services Program Assistant	\$ 20.0947	\$ 24.1125	\$ 28.1302
	Purchasing Agent	\$ 20.0947	\$ 24.1125	\$ 28.1302
7	Acquisitions Specialist	\$ 21.0943	\$ 25.3133	\$ 29.5322
	Collection Maintenance Specialist	\$ 21.0943	\$ 25.3133	\$ 29.5322
	Communications Assistant	\$ 21.0943	\$ 25.3133	\$ 29.5322
8	Ill & Circulation Specialist - Borrowing	\$ 22.1458	\$ 26.5789	\$ 31.0119
	Ill & Circulation Specialist - Lending	\$ 22.1458	\$ 26.5789	\$ 31.0119
9	Public Services Assistant	\$ 23.2620	\$ 27.9158	\$ 32.5696
	Public Services Assistant - Mobile Services	\$ 23.2620	\$ 27.9158	\$ 32.5696
	Youth Services Assistant	\$ 23.2620	\$ 27.9158	\$ 32.5696
10	Public Services Assistant - Cultural Liaison	\$ 24.4176	\$ 29.3050	\$ 34.1923
11	Cataloging Specialist	\$ 25.6378	\$ 30.7718	\$ 35.9057
	Communications Specialist	\$ 25.6378	\$ 30.7718	\$ 35.9057
12	Vacant	\$ 26.9228	\$ 32.3100	\$ 37.6972
13	Circulation Trainer	\$ 28.2729	\$ 33.9262	\$ 39.5795
14	Assistant Branch Manager	\$ 29.6879	\$ 35.6267	\$ 41.5655
	Branch Manager I (IS, PR)	\$ 29.6879	\$ 35.6267	\$ 41.5655
	Desktop Support Technician	\$ 29.6879	\$ 35.6267	\$ 41.5655
15	Records Management Specialist & Executive Asst	\$ 31.1676	\$ 37.4050	\$ 43.6424

2026 WCLS Salary Structure Effective 01/01/2026

Pay Level	Job Title	Beginning Rate	Midpoint	Maximum Rate
16	Branch Manager II (NF, SW)	\$ 32.7255	\$ 39.2745	\$ 45.8234
	Distribution Supervisor	\$ 32.7255	\$ 39.2745	\$ 45.8234
	Payroll Administrator	\$ 32.7255	\$ 39.2745	\$ 45.8234
	Reference Librarian	\$ 32.7255	\$ 39.2745	\$ 45.8234
	Youth Services Librarian	\$ 32.7255	\$ 39.2745	\$ 45.8234
17	Accountant	\$ 34.3610	\$ 41.2346	\$ 48.1081
18	Adult Programming Coordinator	\$ 36.0877	\$ 43.3052	\$ 50.5226
	Branch Manager III (BL, DE, FE, LY, MS)	\$ 36.0877	\$ 43.3052	\$ 50.5226
	Children's Services Coordinator	\$ 36.0877	\$ 43.3052	\$ 50.5226
	Collection Development Librarian	\$ 36.0877	\$ 43.3052	\$ 50.5226
	Early Learning Coordinator	\$ 36.0877	\$ 43.3052	\$ 50.5226
	Foundation Development Director	\$ 36.0877	\$ 43.3052	\$ 50.5226
	Learning Coordinator	\$ 36.0877	\$ 43.3052	\$ 50.5226
	Online Experience Coordinator	\$ 36.0877	\$ 43.3052	\$ 50.5226
	Teen Services Coordinator	\$ 36.0877	\$ 43.3052	\$ 50.5226
19	Facilities Management Coordinator	\$ 37.8919	\$ 45.4664	\$ 53.0409
	Facilities Planning Coordinator	\$ 37.8919	\$ 45.4664	\$ 53.0409
	ILS Administrator	\$ 37.8919	\$ 45.4664	\$ 53.0409
20	Branch Manager IV (EV/SU, LY/BB)	\$ 39.7742	\$ 47.7381	\$ 55.7020
	Mobile Services - Distribution Manager	\$ 39.7742	\$ 47.7381	\$ 55.7020
21	Vacant	\$ 41.7733	\$ 50.1267	\$ 58.4801
22	System Engineer	\$ 43.8633	\$ 52.6321	\$ 61.4008
23	Vacant	\$ 46.0440	\$ 55.2607	\$ 64.4774
24	Vacant	\$ 48.3546	\$ 58.0256	\$ 67.6965
25	Collection Services Manager	\$ 50.7692	\$ 60.9269	\$ 71.0846
	Community Relations Manager	\$ 50.7692	\$ 60.9269	\$ 71.0846
	Facilities Services Manager	\$ 50.7692	\$ 60.9269	\$ 71.0846
	Youth Services Manager	\$ 50.7692	\$ 60.9269	\$ 71.0846
26	Human Resources Manager	\$ 53.3135	\$ 63.9775	\$ 74.6415
27	Vacant	\$ 55.9746	\$ 67.1709	\$ 78.3671
28	Director of Finance and Administration	\$ 58.7786	\$ 70.5330	\$ 82.2873
	IT Services Manager	\$ 58.7786	\$ 70.5330	\$ 82.2873
29	Deputy Director	\$ 61.7122	\$ 74.0574	\$ 86.4025
30	Executive Director	\$ 64.8018	\$ 77.7635	\$ 90.7251

Whatcom County Library System
Employee Census by Department/Position

Department	Job Title	# Employees	Total FTE	# Locations
Administration	Executive Director	1	1.00	1
Administration	Director of Finance & Admin	1	1.00	1
Administration	HR Manager	1	1.00	1
Administration	Community Relations Manager	1	1.00	1
Administration	Accountant	1	0.80	1
Administration	Payroll Administrator	1	0.80	1
Administration	Communications Specialist	2	2.00	1
Administration	Online Experience Coord	1	1.00	1
Administration	Records Management Specialist and Executive Asst	1	1.00	1
Administration	Purchasing Agent	1	0.48	1
Administration	Communications Assistant	1	1.00	1
Administration	Foundation Dev Director	1	0.50	1
IT Services	IT Services Manager	1	1.00	1
IT Services	System Engineer	1	1.00	1
IT Services	Desktop Support Technician	1	1.00	1
Distribution	Mobile Services/Distribution Manager ¹	1	1.00	1
Distribution	Distribution Asst -Driver	4	2.73	1
Distribution	Administrative Services Aide	2	0.90	1
Collection Services	Collection Services Manager	1	1.00	1
Collection Services	Circulation Trainer	1	0.60	1
Collection Services	Collection Dev. Librarian	2	2.00	1
Collection Services	ILL & Circ Asst- Lending	1	0.80	1
Collection Services	ILL & Circ Asst- Borrowing	1	0.88	1
Collection Services	Cataloging Specialist	2	1.80	1
Collection Services	Acquisitions Specialist	2	1.75	1
Collection Services	Collection Maintenance Specialist	2	1.20	1
Collection Services	Processing Specialist	2	1.80	1
Collection Services	ILS Administrator	1	1.00	1
Public Services	Deputy Director	1	1.00	1
Public Services	Adult Programming Coord	1	1.00	1
Public Services	Branch Manager I	2	1.44	2
Public Services	Branch Manager II	2	1.80	2
Public Services	Branch Manager III	3	3.00	3
Public Services	Branch Manager IV ²	2	2.00	4
Public Services	Assistant Branch Manager	2	2.00	2
Public Services	Public Services Assistant -- Mobile Services	3	2.40	1
Public Services	Public Services Assistant -- Cultural Liaison	5	4.60	4
Public Services	Public Services Assistant	27	15.54	10
Public Services	Public Services Clerk	2	0.70	1
Public Services	Public Services Page	33	12.00	7
Youth Services	Youth Services Manager	1	1.00	1
Youth Services	Teen Services Coordinator	1	1.00	1

Youth Services	Children's Services Coordinator ³	1	0.60	1
Youth Services	Youth Services Librarian ³	4	3.40	4
Youth Services	Youth Services Assistant	5	3.80	4
Training	Learning Coordinator	1	1.00	1
Facilities	Facilities Services Manager	1	1.00	1
Facilities	Facilities Planning Coordinator	1	0.80	1
Facilities	Facilities Management Coordinator	1	1.00	1
Facilities	Custodian	12	3.71	10
Totals		149	96.83	

Notes:

Some employees may have more than one role, or multiple positions may be filled by a single person.

WCLS has a pool of individuals (currently 23) who serve as subs for some of the positions above. These staff members do not have budgeted hours and are not included in the FTE count above.

Actual employee count (including non-budgeted subs) is 169.

1. Individual in this position oversees two teams across two departments in one location.
2. Individuals in this position serve at two locations each.
3. Individuals in these positions may serve at two locations.

Policy and Procedure Manual 12.49 Compensation Philosophy



POLICY NUMBER: 12.49

COMPENSATION PHILOSOPHY

SCOPE

This philosophy guides the compensation practices for all Whatcom County Library System employees.

The Whatcom County Library System (WCLS) recognizes the value of our employees and the contributions they make to our WCLS's success. WCLS is committed to offering and maintaining a total compensation system that is fair and competitive, and fosters a quality work environment while being fiscally responsible. Our compensation system reflects the value of both direct and indirect compensation.

Our compensation system aims to support the recruitment, motivation, and retention of a diverse group of talented employees who are dedicated to advancing WCLS's goals, contributing to our mission, and providing exemplary service to our customers.

RELATED POLICIES: [Starting Salary and Benefits Policy 12.05](#); [Employee Benefits Policy 12.07](#); [Proficiency Level Salary Increases Policy 12.13](#).

APPROVALS AND UPDATES

Date	Action	Reviewer	Approved By	Approval Signature
November 19, 2013	Adopted.	–	Whatcom County Library System Board of Trustees	/s/ Deb Lambert

[Edit](#)