

## **PROFESSIONAL READINESS OPPORTUNITIES (PRO)**

### **Purpose:**

The PRO Program will provide participating employees with a unique professional development opportunity to enhance their promotability and explore additional career options with Riverside County. The program allows the County to develop employees to meet its specific business objectives and future needs. Riverside County values and respects its employees and is interested in their professional development. This program will be an effective tool for broadening employee skills, succession planning, increasing engagement, limiting retention problems, and developing quality internal applicants. As employees seek more opportunities for professional growth and development, this program will be a tool to assist them throughout their tenure with the County and provide them with a feeling of being part of an organization that offers opportunities for upward career mobility.

The purpose of the PRO Program is not necessarily to provide training but rather to give an employee the opportunity to gain work experience that would not be obtained in their regular position. PRO participants will ultimately gain the experience needed to compete for a new or promotional opportunity, once they complete the program and a position becomes open. The Program provides both the employee and the manager/supervisor an opportunity to determine if there is a good career fit for the new position. Ultimately the successful operation of County departments is dependent upon the selection of individuals who possess the knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies, and valid credentials required for their position and who also have the personal and professional attributes that will enable success in the position. The PRO Program is designed to provide these types of employees to County departments.

### **Program Objectives:**

The PRO Program is designed to provide professional development opportunities to participating individuals through a temporary assignment within their current department or another County department. A PRO employee can also fill in for employees who are sick, on leave of absence, or returning to work after an injury or illness. The experience gained in the PRO assignment gives the employees an opportunity to assess if a change in career direction is right for them and/or gain experience that can be used to help them qualify for the new career.

Generally, an assignment will be for a six-month period. If at the end of the six-month period the employee still does not qualify for the new position, then the department may choose to extend the assignment for additional time, with the goal of not exceeding one year, or 2080 hours, in its entirety. PRO assignments can be 40 hours per week or for a designated lesser number of hours per week.

Participation in the PRO Program is voluntary and not subject to the language in the following Memorandum of Understanding provisions:

- Memorandum of Understanding, LIUNA – Article V Pay Practices; Section 9: Conformance to Plan
- Memorandum of Understanding, SEIU – Article 6 Pay Practices; Section 10: Working in a Higher Classification

Additionally, Government Code section 20480 places a 960-hour per fiscal year limitation on employee use if the position is open and being recruited for. Ideally, program utilization should be identified during annual strategic planning meetings when departments are forecasting retirements and future vacancies with little to no qualified workforce. This will support program participation prior to positions being open and recruited for.

**Application:**

**I. Procedure**

County department managers who are interested in program utilization should contact the Learning and Organizational Development Division (L&OD) for additional information and to ensure this program will meet the needs of the department. If it is determined that a PRO position is the best option, L&OD will work with the department to determine the next appropriate step and to obtain program documentation. Employees must be in good standing in their current regular position and have received a minimum of a ‘meets expectations’ on their last performance review. A letter from their current supervisor approving their participation in the PRO Program may be accepted in lieu of a current evaluation (within the last 12 months). Additional skills testing may be required for some positions.

1. Upon receipt of the PRO Request Form and resume, an assessment will be made of the candidate’s knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies, education, and/or test scores. Following this review, a decision will be made to determine if the candidate meets the program requirements and any department-established criteria.
2. In most instances, the employee will be participating in the program within their regularly assigned department. All hours worked in the PRO Program are required to be coded on the employee’s timesheet as “PPG” hours vs. “REG” hours. For example, if the prearrangement is 20 hours of program participation per 40-hour week, the timesheet would then reflect 20 hours “PPG” and 20 hours “REG”.
3. If the PRO employee is placed outside of their regularly assigned department:
  - The employee’s position would then be transferred into the TAP Division’s budget.
  - The employee’s salary and benefits are charged to the using department, along with a 10% fee for the program’s administration.
  - The original department must keep its vacated position open for six months in the event the PRO employee is returned to his/her former position.

- The department may temporarily fill the opening with a TAP employee or another PRO Program participant. To fill the opening with a TAP employee the department should work with its TAP representative. To fill the vacancy with a PRO position, please contact L&OD.
- 4. If at any time it is determined that the PRO placement isn't a good fit, for either the employee or the department, L&OD must be contacted to discuss and coordinate the return of the participant to his/her regular duties/responsibilities.
- 5. Once the participant has completed six months in the program, the department will review their performance before deciding to either extend the time or return him/her to his/her regular duties full-time. If the position is entry-level, the employee may be transitioned into the department's regular vacant position with the approvals of the HR Business Partner and L&OD. Otherwise, the position must be filled by conducting an open competitive selection process for the promotion. If the PRO employee does not fully qualify for the advanced level position the department may choose to underfill the position until all conditions have been met. When there is an educational requirement, the employee may not be promoted until this condition has been met. All merit system promotions must be filled through a certified list of eligible candidates.

## II. Use and Guidelines

### Restrictions:

1. Under normal circumstances a PRO position will not be used for any position that is not a regularly budgeted position in the using department.
2. If a position is open and actively being recruited, a department cannot have a PRO participant performing those job duties for more than 960 hours in a fiscal year.
3. Strong consideration should be given to using PRO positions for classifications that have been designated as difficult to recruit by the Human Resources Classification & Compensation Division.
4. Employees who have received a below standards rating on their last performance review, have a history of disciplinary problems or are undergoing current disciplinary action will not be considered for the program.
5. Employees who have been denied participation in the program have no right to appeal this decision. However, problems encountered during their assignment may be addressed with L&OD. All other terms and conditions of employment apply.

## III. Employees Responsibility

1. Employees must be willing to commit to an assignment that will last a minimum of six months.
2. Employees being considered for PRO program participation may be required to take skills and assessment tests for certain positions and candidates must be able to provide references upon request.
3. PRO employees may provide regular feedback about their assignments to a career coach on the L&OD team.
4. Upon completion of the PRO program it is recommended that the participant contact L&OD for assistance in updating their resume.

5. PRO employees may be required to attend internal training programs to obtain additional development while participating in the PRO program.
6. PRO employees (if staying in their regularly assigned department) must record the number of hours per week of program participation on their timesheet as PPG hours in addition to REG hours. PPG and REG hours combined cannot exceed 40 hours per week.

**IV. Department Responsibility**

1. Once approved, coordinate specific days/times for program participation with the employee to ensure a consistent schedule and clear understanding of when the employee is performing their regular and PRO job responsibilities, not to exceed 40 hours total per week.
2. Contact L&OD immediately if the regular PRO position is open and being recruited for.
3. Contact L&OD with any questions, concerns, performance issues, or anticipated changes.