



A Report on Expanding State Job Opportunities for Individuals Without a Bachelor's Degree

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The State Classification Team reviewed 336 job classification series within the Position Classification Plan and surveyed state agencies to identify the positions that require a bachelor's degree or higher as a qualification of employment. The objective of the study was to identify opportunities to reduce or eliminate bachelor's degree requirements, where appropriate, and expand employment and career advancement opportunities through skills-based hiring practices.

• [Project Objectives](#) | p. 10

This study was conducted in accordance with Texas Government Code, Section 654.037(e).

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS FOR JOBS FOUND IN THE STATE'S POSITION CLASSIFICATION PLAN

Thirty-one job classification series require a degree under applicable laws and regulations. Those job classification series are found in the following occupational categories: Medical and Health, Legal, Social Services, Natural Resources, Program Management, Engineering and Design, and Public Safety.

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Agency policies and practices drive degree requirements beyond applicable laws and regulations for another 72 job classification series.

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STRATEGIES TO EXPAND CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATE EMPLOYEES

Opportunities exist to create more flexible career pathways for state employees by reducing unnecessary education requirements. Clarifying language was added to the Plan's job descriptions, as appropriate, to reinforce agency discretion in establishing minimum qualifications.

Most state agencies reported that they have plans to or have already begun to make changes to expand opportunities for individuals without a bachelor's degree. Implementation will occur over time across the statewide workforce.

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Chapter 1-A Degree Requirements for Jobs Found in the State's Position Classification Plan

The State Classification Team reviewed 336 job classification series within the Position Classification Plan (Plan) and surveyed state agencies to identify the positions that require a bachelor's degree or higher as a qualification of employment to determine which requirements could be reduced, where appropriate.

The study found that degree requirements are driven by multiple factors including state statutes, administrative code, and licensing regulations (collectively referred to as applicable laws and regulations), as well as state agency policies and practices. The results of the study distinguished between requirements that were mandated and those that were discretionary, which helped identify opportunities to reduce unnecessary degree requirements, where appropriate, to expand access to state employment and support career advancement.

Thirty-one job classification series require a degree under applicable laws and regulations.

Of the 336 job classification series reviewed (see text box), the study found that only 31 (9.2 percent) require a degree under applicable laws and regulations.

Those job classification series are found in the following occupational categories: Medical and Health, Legal, Social Services, Natural Resources, Program Management, Engineering and Design, and Public Safety. For these jobs, degree and licensure requirements are listed on the State job descriptions and have no substitutions unless specifically provided by applicable laws and regulations.

Plan Definitions

A **job classification series** is a hierarchical structure of jobs arranged into job classification titles involving work of the same nature but requiring different levels of responsibility. For example, Accountant I–VII.

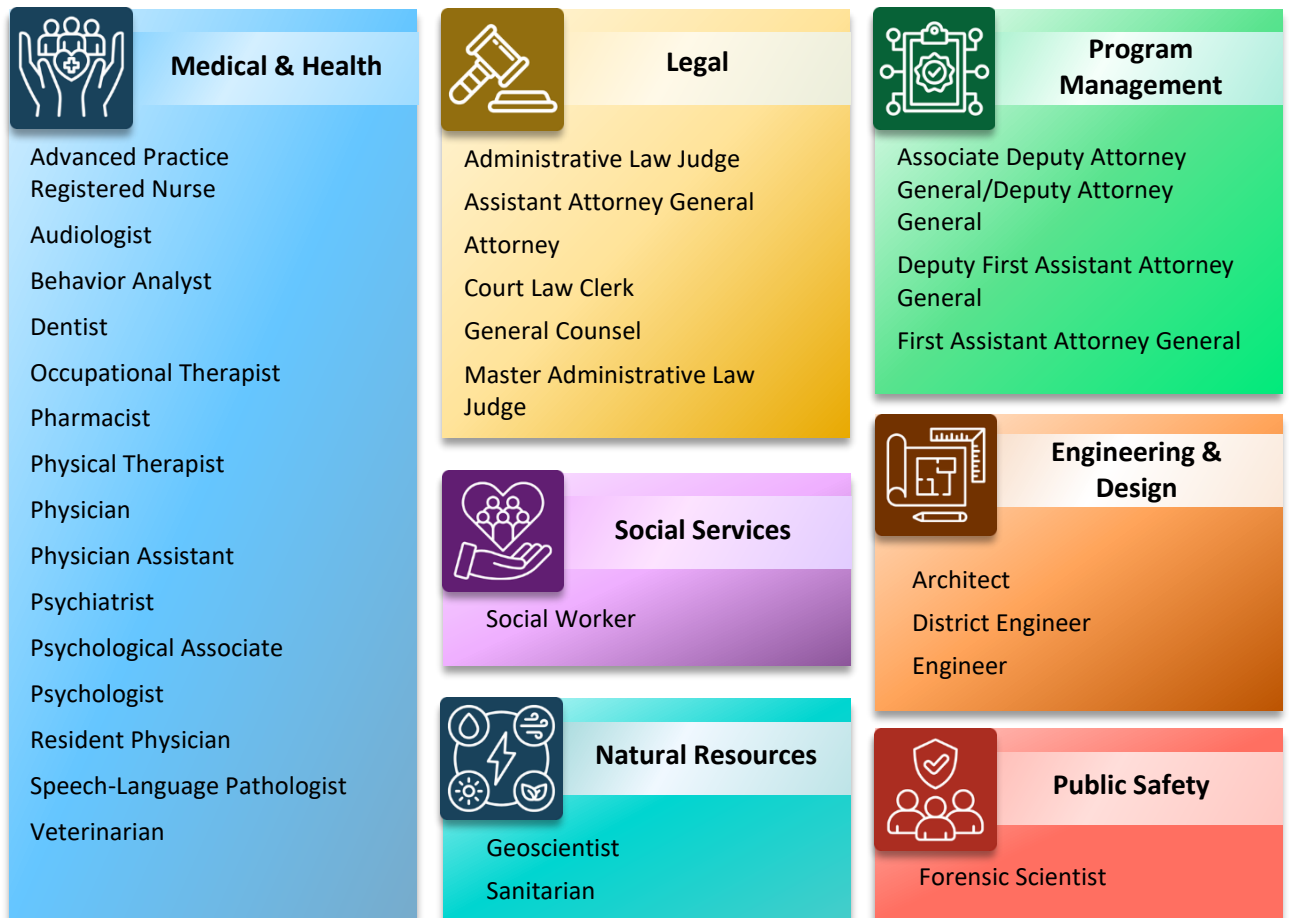
An **occupational category** is a broad series of job families characterized by the nature of work performed (for example, Accounting, Auditing, and Finance.)

A **job classification title** is an individual job within a job classification series. Currently, the Plan covers 1,246 job classification titles (for example, Accountant I).

See Figure 1 for a list of job classification series within those occupational categories. Applicable laws and regulations that govern education requirements for these series are included in the corresponding State job descriptions, which are available on the [State Auditor's Office's State Classification Team website](#).

Figure 1

Job Classification Series in the Plan Requiring a Bachelor's Degree or Higher¹



Source: The State Auditor's Office's analysis and job descriptions.

¹ The roles under Program Management function as senior executive leadership and provide oversight across multiple divisions and key program areas, which is why they reside within the Program Management occupational category. Associate Deputy Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General are considered as one job classification series in the Plan.

Chapter 1-B

Current Agency Practices

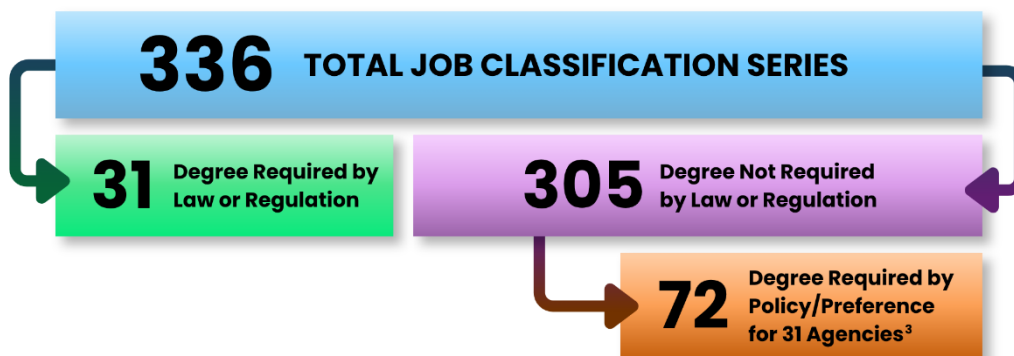
In October 2025, the State Classification Team surveyed 89 state agencies subject to the Plan to gather information on state agencies' current job classifications and workforce practices regarding education requirements. Of the 89 state agencies surveyed, 77 agencies (86.5 percent) responded to our survey.

Agency policies and practices drive degree requirements beyond applicable laws and regulations.

In addition to the 31 job classification series that require a degree due to applicable laws and regulations, almost half of the surveyed agencies reported that they require a degree for 72 additional job classification series without any substitution² (see Figure 2). The reasons given varied across agencies and were often based on agency policy, practice, operational needs, or preference, as reported in the survey.

Figure 2

Number of Job Classification Series by Degree Requirements



Source: State Auditor's Office's analysis.

² The 72 job classification series are a cumulative total and no agency reported requiring a degree for all 72 of those series. This number is based on the most current information at the time of the survey and is subject to change.

³ Requirements vary by agency and may only apply to selected levels within a job classification series.

The most common job classification series for which agencies reported requiring a degree with no substitutions include:

- Accountant.
- Deputy Director.
- Director.
- Internal Auditor.
- Manager.

In some cases, agencies require a degree because they prefer the job to be filled by a licensed professional. For example, a state agency may require a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) license for an accounting position or require a director who manages attorneys to be a licensed attorney. In these types of situations, degree requirements without substitutions are driven by a preference for professional licensure associated with the position.

Results are presented at the job classification series rather than at the individual job classification level because agencies may not use all levels within a series and may establish degree requirements at different levels based on their business needs. For example, while the Accountant job classification series includes multiple levels, an agency may require a bachelor's degree only for higher level Accountant positions.

See [Appendix 2](#) for the list of job classification series with degree requirements without substitutions under agency policies and preference, sorted by occupational category.

Chapter 2

Strategies to Expand Career Advancement Opportunities for State Employees

The State Classification Team's survey results indicated that, while some degree requirements are mandated due to applicable laws and regulations, a significant number of positions include requirements that are established at the agency level and may be evaluated for potential modification. Agencies should focus their efforts to reduce education requirements on positions for which a degree is required, in policy or practice, without substitution options.

There are opportunities to create more flexible career pathways for state employees by reducing unnecessary education requirements.

The State Classification Team developed the [*Skills-Based Hiring and Career Advancement Implementation Guide for State Agencies*](#) to support agencies in their efforts to expand career advancement opportunities.

The guide is intended to aid agencies in their efforts to:

- Identify and remove degree requirements where possible.
- Broaden applicant pools by emphasizing relevant skills, knowledge, and experience.
- Promote advancement opportunities for employees without degrees.
- Maintain compliance with legal, ethical, and regulatory requirements while maintaining high performance standards.

The State Classification Team made updates to the Plan's job descriptions to help support skills-based hiring.

Change to State of Texas Job Descriptions. In addition to reviewing all the job classification series within the Plan, the State Classification Team added clarifying language in the Plan's job descriptions, as appropriate, to reinforce agency discretion in establishing minimum qualifications. The change reads:

Agencies have the discretion to identify the general or specialized experience, education, or certifications required for positions and may tailor the qualification requirements to specifically meet the agency's business needs. Agencies may substitute experience, education, military service, apprenticeships, and relevant credentials for one another, if appropriate and allowed by statute.

This language was added to the job descriptions for a job classification series in which a bachelor's degree was identified as generally preferred. Job descriptions for a job classification series with lower education preferences, such as Receptionist or Groundskeeper, were not modified.

Most state agencies reported that they have plans to or have already begun to make changes to expand opportunities for individuals without a bachelor's degree.

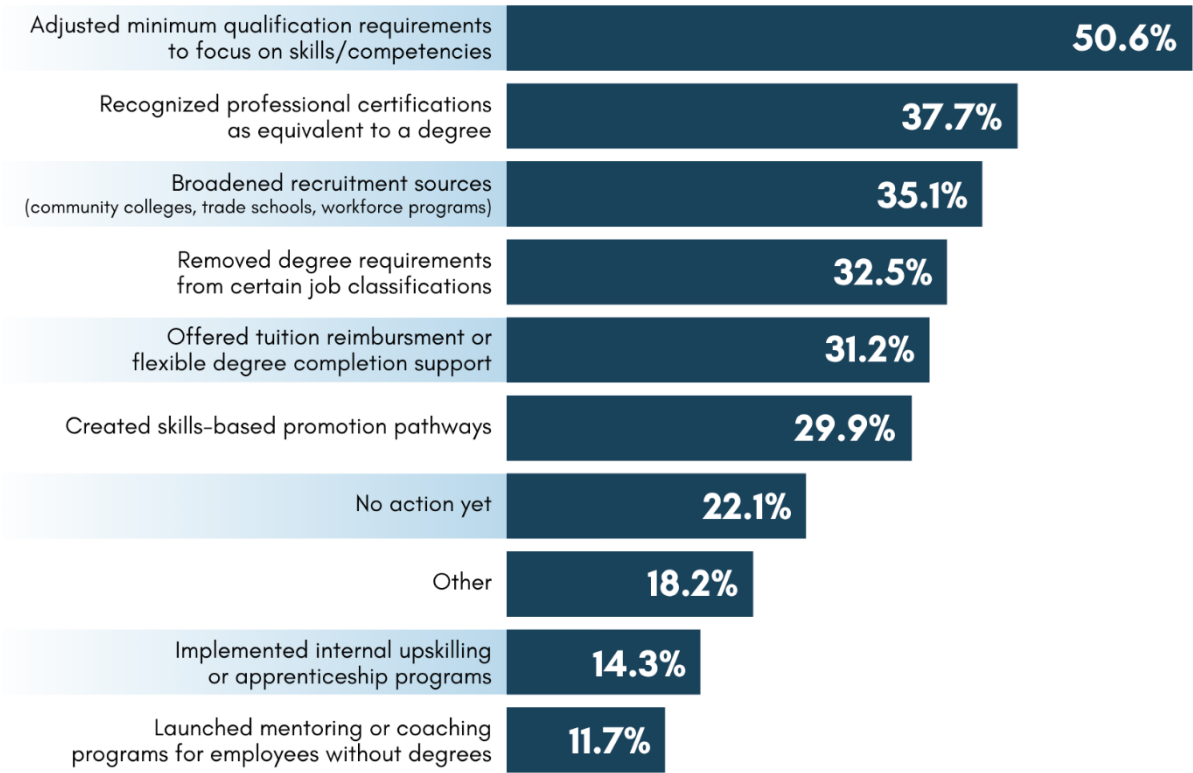
Agency Strategies. Of the 89 state agencies surveyed, many reported that they already have equivalency standards in place for bachelor's degree requirements and are taking, or plan to take, additional steps to reduce degree requirements and expand opportunities for employees and applicants without degrees. For example, some state agencies that list a bachelor's degree as a job qualification also allow relevant experience to substitute for education, subject to agency practices.

As shown in Figure 3 on the next page, these strategies include adjusting minimum qualification requirements to focus on skills and competencies; expanding the use of equivalencies such as certifications and experience; and

removing degree requirements for certain positions. Agencies also reported efforts to expand recruitment pipelines and invest in workforce development through training, apprenticeships, mentoring, and skills-based promotion pathways.

Figure 3

Current and Future Strategies by State Agencies^{4 5}



Source: The State Auditor’s Office’s agency survey.

Implementation will occur over time across the statewide workforce.

Due to the scope of the Plan, which is used by approximately 150,000 classified state employees, changes to the job requirements cannot be implemented immediately. Instead, it is reasonable to expect that agencies will implement

⁴ Agencies could select more than one answer to this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum up to 100.0%.

⁵ Other responses included establishing equivalency standards, developing career ladder opportunities, implementing online learning managements systems, and offering internship programs.

updates incrementally as part of normal business processes, including reviewing job descriptions and job postings.

The State Classification Team will continue collaborating with agencies to identify opportunities to reduce unnecessary education requirements, support skills-based hiring practices, evaluate opportunities to expand career advancement for employees without a bachelor's degree, and collect information necessary to meet reporting requirements in accordance with Texas Government Code 654.037(e).



Appendix 1

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Objectives

The objectives of this project were to:

- Identify state agency positions for which the education, experience, and training requirements could be reduced to increase the pool of qualified applicants.
- Determine the extent to which bachelor's degree requirements can be reduced as a condition of employment.
- Evaluate strategies to expand career advancement opportunities for state agency employees who do not hold a bachelor's degree.

Scope

The scope of this report encompassed all the job classification series of the State's Position Classification Plan (Plan) for fiscal year 2026 of the 89th Legislative Biennium in accordance with Texas Government Code, Chapter 654.

The following members of the State Auditor's staff performed the study:



- Lara Foronda Tai, CCP, PHR, SHRM-CP (Project Manager)
- Laura Alvarez, MBA (Assistant Project Manager)
- Carla Dykstra, SHRM-SCP
- Robert G. Kiker, CFE, CGAP (Quality Control Reviewer)
- Sharon K. Schneider, CCP, PHR, SHRM-CP (Classification Manager)

Methodology

The methodology for this project included identifying which job classification series in the Plan require a bachelor's degree under applicable laws and regulations. In addition, the State Classification Team surveyed 89 state agencies who are subject to the Plan, requesting data on job classification series requiring a bachelor's degree or higher based on agency policy or preference. The following agencies are exempt from the Plan: the Higher Education Coordinating Board, Teacher Retirement System, and the Texas Permanent School Fund Corporation. In addition, all higher education institutions, legislative agencies, and self-directed, semi-independent agencies are exempt from the Plan. The State Classification Team conducted this study from September 2025 through June 2026.

This study was not an audit; therefore, the information in this report was not subjected to all the tests and confirmations that would be performed in an audit. However, the information in this report was subject to certain quality control procedures to ensure accuracy.

Appendix 2

Job Classification Series That Require a Degree Under Agency Policies and Preference

Figure 4 lists the job classification series that require a bachelor’s degree or higher under agency policies and preference with no substitution. State agencies identified and submitted these job classification series in response to our survey. This list is based on the most current information at time of the survey and is subject to change.

Figure 4

Job Classification Series That Require a Degree Under Agency Policies and Preference With No Substitution

Occupational Category	Job Classification Series
Accounting, Auditing, and Finance	Accountant
	Auditor
	Financial Analyst
	Financial Examiner
	Independent Audit Reviewer
	Internal Auditor
	Portfolio Manager
	Tax Auditor
Compliance, Inspection, and Investigation	Investigator
Criminal Justice	Halfway House Superintendent
	Parole Officer
Education	Teacher Aide
Engineering and Design	Engineering Specialist
Human Resources and Training and Development	Human Resources Specialist
Information and Communication	Government Relations Specialist

Occupational Category	Job Classification Series
Information Technology	Information Security Officer
	Information Technology Auditor
	Information Technology Business Analyst
	Programmer
	Systems Analyst
Insurance	Actuary
Law Enforcement	Game Warden - Parks and Wildlife Department
	Pilot Investigator
	Sergeant/Lieutenant/Captain/Assistant Commander/Commander/Major, Game Warden - Parks and Wildlife Department
	Sergeant/Lieutenant/Captain/Major, State Park Police Officer - Parks and Wildlife Department
	State Park Police Officer - Parks and Wildlife Department
	Trainee/Probationary Game Warden - Parks and Wildlife Department
	Trainee (Cadet)/Probationary State Park Police Officer - Parks and Wildlife Department
Legal	Chief Deputy Clerk
	Clerk of the Court
	Deputy Clerk
	Law Clerk
Library and Records	Archeologist
	Archivist
	Curator
	Historian
	Librarian
Medical and Health	Epidemiologist
	Health Informatics Specialist
	Health Physicist
	Microbiologist
	Molecular Biologist
	Nurse
	Public Health Nurse
	Registered Therapist

Occupational Category	Job Classification Series
Natural Resources	Chemist
	Environmental Protection Specialist
	Hydrologist
	Natural Resources Specialist
	Toxicologist
Planning, Research, and Statistics	Data Analyst
	Economist
	Planner
	Research Specialist
Program Management	Deputy Director
	Director
	Manager
	Program Management Specialist
	Program Specialist
	Program Supervisor
	Project Manager
	Staff Services Officer
Property Management and Procurement	Grant Specialist
	Purchaser
Social Services	Chaplain
	Family and Protective Services Supervisor
	Guardianship Specialist
	Guardianship Supervisor
	Qualified Intellectual Disability Professional
	Substance Abuse Counselor
	Transition Coordinator
	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Source: The State Auditor's Office's agency survey.



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