

Tompkins County Employment & Civil Service

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

1. What is Tompkins County government?

Tompkins County government is composed of fifteen elected legislators and a variety of departments or divisions that provide services to county residents. A directory of those units is at the county web site: <https://tompkinscountyny.gov/departments>

2. How can I learn more about Tompkins County as an organization (mission, programs, services) and as an employer?

At the county web site <https://tompkinscountyny.gov/> you can review the links to departments and services and you may also call County Administration at 607-274-5551. The County Employment link connects to the Human Resources Department's home page, which has links to vacancies and the civil service exam schedule, and it is the venue for submitting job applications.

3. What is Civil Service? Why are there laws about civil service testing and procedures for hiring within the government?

Broadly defined, civil service encompasses employment in federal, state, and local governmental agencies. The civil service system originated in an effort to end the spoils system, whereby a newly elected party awarded government jobs to its supporters and dismissed employees who were members of an opposing party. As a result, the political appointees were not necessarily the most competent or best trained people. Civil service was designed to end the inefficiencies and continual turnover. The modern system of civil service seeks to ensure that appointments to municipal public service jobs are based on merit and fitness which, as far as practical, are determined by competitive examination.

The County manages all civil service work for all positions in the Tompkins County government, as well as in the towns, villages, school districts, and some special districts, *except* for the City of Ithaca and the Ithaca School District. It is the County's duty to ensure that all positions under its administration are in compliance with NYS Civil Service Law.

4. Are all jobs in the County government civil service jobs?

Most jobs in County government are within civil service jurisdiction. There are five classes of jobs:

Unclassified: Elected positions and teaching positions in school districts;

Exempt: Appointed positions;

Noncompetitive: Positions for which it is not practical to determine merit and fitness through a competitive exam;

Labor class: Positions involving considerable physical labor;

Competitive: All other County jobs.

5. How can I get information on jobs in County government?

On our home page there is a link to our Vacancy List, which identifies jobs for which we are recruiting candidates. The Examinations link identifies forthcoming civil service exams.

6. Do I have to be a resident of Tompkins County to apply for work with the County? What if I am a student and live here only during the academic year?

We serve residents of Tompkins County and the six contiguous counties. You must have been a resident for at least one month immediately preceding the date of application. Students who are residents during the academic year are eligible for employment with the County. The residency requirement may be waived in some circumstances.

7. How can I explore opportunities in specific types of positions (e.g., clerical, management, technical) if I don't know the specific job titles?

On the Personnel Department's home page there is a link for email notices that allows you to input your email address and select the employment categories in which you are interested. When an exam or vacancy occurs in any of those categories an email notice will be sent to you.

8. How can I determine the minimum qualifications for jobs?

Minimum qualifications are specified in each job description and exam announcement, which are linked to our home page.

9. What types of appointments exist?

There are temporary, provisional, and permanent appointments. Temporary and provisional appointments are advertised on the Vacancy List. Permanent appointments in competitive titles may be gained after taking the appropriate civil service exam. The County occasionally has short-term temporary positions and internships, and the Highway division hires summer seasonal workers.

10. How can I find out what exams are scheduled?

At the Personnel Department's home page select the link for Examinations.

11. Are there study materials for exams?

Some study guides are posted on the Personnel Department web site. Others can be ordered from the LEAP program of the Civil Service Employee Association; order forms are available from the Tompkins County Personnel Office. Study guides may also be available at the Tompkins County Public Library and through local bookstores.

12. After I take a civil service exam may I see my results? Can I find out which questions I have missed or answered incorrectly?

Test results are communicated in a "Rank and Score Letter," which provides your score and position on the list relative to the other candidates (rank).

If you wish to learn which questions you missed or answered incorrectly, there are three types of review: pre-rating: computational, and post-rating.

A pre-rating review occurs the Saturday following your test date and is held at a State review center. It allows you to compare the test questions and your answers against the tentative rating key. At this time you may make objection to the wording of questions or answers. If enough people protest a specific question or answer, it may be eliminated from the exam and the rating scales would be adjusted accordingly.

A computational review occurs after the exam has been scored, the List of Eligibles has been established, and you have been notified of your score and ranking on the List. You have ten days from the date of your rank and score letter to request the materials necessary for a computational review. The State will provide a copy of the answer sheet and the master-scoring key, which tells you the subjects of the examination and how many questions were included for each subject. With this review you will not see the actual test questions, but you can use this review to compare your answer sheet to the scoring key, which may help you determine your areas of strength or weakness.

A post-rating review may be done whenever the exam consists only of an evaluation of your training and experience (not a written exam). After a "Training and Experience" exam you will be notified of your score and relative position on the eligible list. If you wish, you may review the exam papers at the Personnel Department, provided you request this review in writing within ten days after the date of the postmark of such notice.

13. Does the County have an affirmative action program or workforce diversification plan for underrepresented candidates?

Tompkins County government, as an employer, strives to represent the diverse population of the county and to be inclusive without regard to race, color, national origin, ethnicity, sex/gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability, status as a special disabled veteran or Vietnam era veteran, or status as an ex-offender. The County's Affirmative Action program has a strong commitment to the recruitment and employment of protected class groups.

***TOMPKINS COUNTY IS COMMITTEED TO EQUITY AND INCLUSION. WE
ENCOURAGE OTHERS WITH SIMILAR VALUES TO APPLY.***