

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and ELSA Programs



San Francisco Oversight Division
120 Howard Street, Room 760
San Francisco, CA 94105

Carlos A. Torrico
Classification Appeals Officer

11/17/98

Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a

Classification Appeal Decision Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code	
Appellant:	[appellant's name]
Agency classification:	Budget Analyst GS-560-11
Organization:	[appellant's installation] U.S. Department of Agriculture
OPM decision:	Budget Analyst GS-560-11
OPM decision number:	C-0560-11-01

certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

[appellant's name & address]

[name & address of servicing personnel office]

[name & address of regional personnel office]

Director, Office of Human Resource
Management
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Introduction

On February 23, 1998, the San Francisco Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [the appellant]. Her position is currently classified as Budget Analyst, GS-560-11. However, she believes the grade level should be GS-12. The appellant works in the [her installation] U.S. Department of Agriculture. We have accepted and decided her appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

General issues

In her appeal [the appellant] compares her position to higher graded “Budget Coordinators” in the Regional Office in terms of budgetary complexity and dollar value. Therefore she believes that her position should be higher graded. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing the appellant’s current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107 and 5112). Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant’s position to other positions as a basis for deciding her appeal.

This appeal decision is based on a careful review of all information submitted by the appellant and her agency, and telephone interviews with the appellant and her supervisor. Both the appellant and her supervisor have certified to the accuracy of the appellant’s official position description (number 4829912).

Position information

As a member of separate teams at the three organizational levels of the [the appellant’s installation], the appellant performs budgetary analysis in the formulation, justification, execution, review, and reprogramming of appropriated and revolving fund budgets. The [the appellant’s organization] consists of the [the appellant’s organization] and is one of seven Ecogroups in [the appellant’s region]. The [the appellant’s organization] consolidates, prioritizes and allocates assigned forest budgets. At the regional level, the appellant is a member of the Regional Analysis Team (A-Team), a special staff advisory body of technically diverse members who provide budget and workload analysis, information and recommendations to senior regional management. Each of these assignments are represented as separate major duties in the appellant’s position description.

Our interviews and other material of record furnish additional information about her duties and responsibilities and how they are performed.

Series, title, and standard determination

We find that the appellant's position is properly covered by the Budget Analysis Series, GS-560, titled Budget Analyst, and graded using the grade level criteria in the GS-560 classification standard (dated July 1981). Neither the agency nor the appellant disagree.

Grade determination

The budget analysis standard uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES), which employs nine factors. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard or guide describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspect and still not be credited at a higher level. Our evaluation with respect to the nine FES factors follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position - Level 1-7, 1250 points

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts required to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of skill necessary to apply this knowledge. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, knowledge must be required and applied.

The knowledge required by this position meets Level 1-7 (described on pages 24-26 of the standard). At level 1-7 the work requires detailed, intense knowledge of the assigned organization and its programs' budgetary policies, precedents, goals, objectives, regulations, and guidelines; sources, types and methods of funding; and budgetary and financial relationships between the assigned budget(s) and the programs and budgets of other agency organizations and components. In addition, this level requires knowledge and skill in the application of methods and techniques for analyzing and evaluating the effects of changing program plans and funding on the accomplishment of the organization's budget and program milestone, e.g., cost-benefit analysis, planning-programming-budgeting.

The appellant, likewise, must have detailed knowledge of the various budget processes and funding sources within the [the appellant's agency], i.e., appropriated National Forest Fund (NFF), timber sales generating Permanent /Trust Funds, National Forest Timber Management Fund, and Salvage Sales Fund. Assigned programs and budgets include appropriated and various revolving funds associated with federally mandated forest management policies, and income generating timber sales that involve sharing proceeds with non-federal government entities. The evolving nature of these programs and their interaction require the appellant to perform cost-benefit analysis to evaluate the effects of policy changes, environmental mandates, appropriation adjustments, and projected declines in timber sales on current and outyear work plans and budgets within [the appellant's region]. Specifically, at the ECT level, the appellant has conducted workforce analyses to assess the impact of reduced funding on work force size and skill level requirements and recommending least impacting areas for reduction. At the A-team level, the appellant has participated in a cost analysis of implementing a proposed environmental mitigation plan (Interior Columbia River Ecological Resource Management Plan). The analysis includes proposed adjustments to work management

concepts as well as justification for additional funding. In addition, as a member of a risk assessment team, the appellant contributed to an assessment of “high risk” timber, i.e., due to economic and political factors, to identify its various sources and the program and budgetary ramifications of downward adjustments.

The appellant’s assignments do not meet Level 1-8 (page 27). Level 1-8 requires a mastery of concepts, principles, practices, laws and regulations which apply to budgeting for substantive national programs and services. It requires comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the federal budget process and an expert knowledge of the financial and budgetary relationship between the organization and other governmental and private organizations. Such knowledge and skills are applied in developing, recommending and implementing budgetary policies regarding the financing and accomplishment of important national programs.

The appellant, although extremely knowledgeable about [the appellant’s agency] programs and budgeting, is not required to apply Level 1-8 knowledge to national programs.

This factor is evaluated at Level 1-7 and 1250 points are credited.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls - Level 2-4, 450 points

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee’s responsibility, and the review of completed work.

The appellant’s position meets Level 2-4 (pages 34-35). At Level 2-4, employees are assigned continuing responsibility for independently performing budgetary functions in one or more phases of the budget. This level is distinguished from Level 2-3 principally by the employee’s added responsibility for independent planning and carrying out work on an extended basis, and for making a wide range of technical budgetary decisions, commitments and recommendations. The employee is responsible for independently planning, coordinating and scheduling budgetary financing for new programs; interpreting ambiguous and conflicting budgetary policies and regulations; reconciling conflicting budgetary and program objectives; and assessing the long-term effects of new or revised legislation on the organization’s budget and programs. The employee selects the analytical methods to be used in estimating funding needs, strategies for presenting budgetary requests and the methods to be used in checking the accuracy and reliability of budget forecasts and controls over the use of funds. Completed work is reviewed for effectiveness in meeting objectives and deadlines and agreement of budgetary actions and recommendations with objectives of other areas of the budget and programs of the employing organization.

The appellant’s work, as a member of teams at three organizational levels within [the appellant’s region], with primary emphasis on outyear budgeting, involves extended planning in formulation of budgets. Her role as the primary budget analyst on several interdisciplinary teams requires independent responsibility for selecting analytical methods necessary to estimate and justify budget needs, assessing the budgetary impact of directed program changes and providing sound budgetary

rationale for recommendations with significant potential impact on the organization's work programs. The ECT and A-Team charters places the appellant and other team members out of a normal organizational setting and creates an environment where work assignments are typically group generated and the appellant is expected to exercise considerable independence.

The appellant's work does not meet Level 2-5. At Level 2-5 the employee is responsible for, and expert in, all phases and methods of budgeting for substantive nationwide programs. Considerable delegated authority is exercised with approval authority for financial transactions, funds transfers and/or withholding. At this level, the employee is considered as the sole technical authority for the employing agency in budgetary matters. Within [the appellant's region], approval authorities and technical policy responsibilities rest with a regional budget office and Washington Office levels.

This factor is evaluated at Level 2-4 and 450 points are credited.

Factor 3, Guidelines - Level 3-3, 275 points

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment necessary to apply them.

At Level 3-3 (pages 38-39), guidelines available and regularly used in the work are in the form of budgetary policies, precedents and regulations; and specific substantive program goals, production schedules and work processes. Comparable to Level 3-3, the appellant regularly uses pertinent budgetary [the appellant's agency] manuals and handbooks, Washington Office correspondence and program related long term [the appellant's agency] Plans and their annual monitoring reports.

Level 3-3 requires judgment in interpreting, adapting and applying guidelines such as instructions in budget formulation and budget execution to the analysis and development of budget estimates and annual work plans for continuing programs and organizations. A significant amount of the appellant's time is spent adapting guidelines to specific [the appellant's agency] situations and changing local emphasis. As the principle budget analyst on the regional A Team, the appellant developed specialized instructions for subordinate levels covering data collection related to addressing timber sales shortfalls and developed instructions covering revisions in timber sales collections and management of salvage sales and appropriated funds.

This position does not meet Level 3-4. At Level 3-4, guidelines regularly applied consist of broad budgetary guidance such as circulars, directives and regulations issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) which relate to the division of Federal funds among agency programs; regulations published by the Treasury Department; judicial decisions, Comptroller General decisions and similar precedents specific to the budget and programs of the employing organization. In addition to being broad, guidelines at Level 3- 4 provide a general outline of the concepts, methods, and goals to be followed, e.g., in formulating long-range budget estimates covering the budgets and operations of "*new or substantially revamped national programs*". Some Comptroller General decisions and legislative language guidelines are utilized by the appellant, however these are not applied on a regular and recurring basis. Also, Level 3-4 envisions the employee exercising a great deal of

judgment and discretion with broad latitude in interpreting and applying guidelines, organization wide. The appellant's participation in several analyses that address program changes that had significant budgetary/funding implications(i.e., reduced timber sales, environmental impacts and salvage sales obligations) required developing local guidelines to assess individual [the appellant's agency], Ecogroup and [the appellant's region] impacts and developing revised management guidance at the [the appellant's agency] level. However the limited scope of the data collection and management guidelines falls short of the broad organization-wide applicability of Level 3-4. Wherever policies and regulations are conflicting or require authoritative interpretation, these issues are referred through the regional budget office to the Washington Office for definitive resolution.

This factor is evaluated at Level 3-3 and 275 points are credited.

Factor 4, Complexity - Level 4-4, 225 points

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality required to perform the work.

The complexity of the appellant's position meets Level 4-4 (pages 44-45). Work at Level 4-4 involves a wide variety of analytical and technical budget administrative functions for substantive programs and support activities that are funded through many separate sources, e.g., appropriations, allotments, reimbursable accounts, and/or transfer of funds between organizations. The appellant's assigned programs involve a variety of funding arrangements such as appropriated [the appellant's agency] funds; permanent/trust collection funds generated by timber sales; and Salvage Sales funds that are shared with local government entities. At Level 4-4 programs and funding are unstable and subject to change throughout the budget year necessitating frequent adjustments to budget estimates and requiring partial reprogramming. The appellant regularly must look at frequent changes in program and budget levels among the various funding sources to analyze workforce impacts and recommend, as a ECT and A-Team member, outyear reprioritizations. The appellant has made use of cost-benefit analysis, workforce analysis, trend analysis, and criteria based budget formulation techniques to facilitate team generated recommendations.

This position does not fully meet Level 4-5 (pages 45-47). Unlike the appellant's position, work at Level 4-5 is characterized by a greater degree of uncertainty than at Level 4-4. Although the appellant deals with continually changing program objectives, plans and funding requirements, and applies some of the analytical methods found at Level 4-5, our fact-finding disclosed that she does not operate in a fiscal environment of significant uncertainty and difficulty. For instance, at her organizational level she is not involved in implementing new substantive programs that lack precedent data for budgetary purposes, nor is she directly concerned with changes in program objectives and funding requirements resulting from new legislation, or assessing the impact of changes in technology on substantive program and budgetary requirements.

This factor is evaluated at Level 4-4 and 225 points are credited.

Factor 5, Scope and effect - Level 5-4, 225 points

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work and the effect of the work products or services both within and outside the organization.

The scope and effect of the appellant's work meets Level 5-4 (pages 51-53). At that level, the purpose of the work is to formulate and/or monitor the execution of long range, detailed budget forecasts and plans to fund the implementation of substantive programs. Work involves established financial and budgetary goals, timetables, milestones, and other criteria against which the relative costs and benefits of program achievements can be measured, and assessing cost-effectiveness in meeting these goals. The appellant's work primarily involves four different fiscal year programs and budgets, i.e., prior, current and two outyears. The substantive programs involved are related to the stewardship of [the appellant's agency] assigned to [the appellant's region]. Both the ECT and A-teams are primarily involved with outyear program and budget issues and the appellant analyzes trends and assesses impacts of program and funding changes cutting across component lines, and participates in team generated recommendations on reprogramming and priority adjustment which have a direct bearing on the conduct of substantive programs within the multiple echelon [the appellant's region]. The environmental sensitivity of the budgeting process in which the appellant works is of interest to local timber harvesting firms.

Level 5-5 (pages 53-55) is not met. The scope of work at that level involves analysis and advice to subordinate agency levels on substantive national programs that affect the funds availability and their allotment to agency components and subcomponents, and whose rate of obligation and expenditure impact the budgets programs of other Federal and State agencies, national industries or foreign trade. This level would be reserved for the [the appellant's agency] (bureau) level which assumes primary responsibility for developing, formulating and issuing authoritative budgetary guidance related to administering a substantive national program.

Level 5-4 is assigned to this factor and 225 points are credited.

Factor 6, Personal contacts- Level 6-2, 25 points

Factor 6 covers the people and conditions or settings under which contacts are made. It includes face-to-face contact and telecommunications dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain.

The appellant's personal contacts are evaluated at Level 6-2 (page 57). Typical of this level are contacts with managers responsible for substantive technical programs and/or their representatives, and technical subject matter specialists; program analysts; and other budget and financial analysts at various levels outside the immediate organization but within the agency, in field or headquarters locations. Likewise, the appellant, as a ECT and A-Team member, maintains regular and recurring contacts with Forest Supervisors, Forest Planners, Program Analysts, and other budget and financial analysts at various levels within [the appellant's region] and the [the appellant's agency].

The appellant's contact do not reach Level 6-3 (page 57). At this level contacts are with individuals from outside the agency who represent the budget and program interests of other Federal agencies, contractors, private business and financial interests, state, local and foreign governments, public and private institutions, or Congressional staff members. Characteristic of this level are contacts with the director or deputy director of the employing agency (which for the appellant is the Department of Agriculture), key officials of comparable rank and authorities in other agencies and OMB budget examiners.

Level 6-2 is assigned to this factor and 25 points are credited.

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts- Level 7-3, 120 points

Factor 7 covers the reasons for the contacts described in Factor 6.

The appellant's position meets Level 7-3 (page 59). Similar to that level, the purpose of her contacts is to persuade program managers and other officials in positions of decision-making authority with widely differing goals and interests to follow a recommended course of action consistent with established budget policy, objectives and regulations. The appellant's role as a ECT and A-Team member includes advising individual [installation] Supervisors within the Southwest Idaho Ecogroup and the [appellant's region] decision making body, i.e., Gang of 8 (G8) on budget matters affecting program operations. As a team lead analyst, the appellant recommends adjustments to meet long range program needs that require persuasion and negotiations due to conflicting budgetary and program objectives, i.e., declining timber sales and environmental issues requiring reductions in levels of spending and workforce size and reprogramming to meet new endangered species and environmental impact initiatives.

Level 7-4 (pages 59-60) is not met. At that level, the purpose of contacts is to present, justify, and defend before fund granting and approval authorities controversial budgetary recommendations and actions. The nature of the recommendations and actions, i.e., increased appropriations; combining, consolidating or modifying nationwide programs; decreased services to the American public; and alternative methods of financing substantive programs, are likely to impact the national economy, the public welfare, foreign affairs and/or the plans, programs and personnel of Federal agencies. Such purpose of contacts would only be evident at the highest levels of the agency.

Factor 7 is evaluated at Level 7-3 and is credited with 120 points.

Factor 8, Physical demands - Level 8-1, 5 points

The physical demands on the appellant meet Level 8-1(page 60), which is the highest level for this factor described in the standard. As is typical of this level, the appellant's work is sedentary with no special physical effort or skill required.

This factor is evaluated at Level 8-1 and is credited with 5 points.

Factor 9, Work environment - Level 9-1, 5 points

The appellant's work environment is evaluated at Level 9-1 (page 61), which is the highest level for this factor described in the standard. As is typical of this level, the appellant's work is usually performed in an office setting which is adequately lighted and climate controlled.

This factor is evaluated at Level 9-1 and is credited with 5 points.

Summary

In summary, we have evaluated the appellant's position as follows:

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-7	1250
2. Supervisory controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-4	225
5. Scope and effect	5-4	225
6. Personal contacts	6-2	25
7. Purpose of contacts	7-3	120
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total points:		2580

The appellant's position is credited with 2580 points. Therefore, in accordance with the grade conversion table on page 21 of the standard, the position is properly graded at the GS-11 level.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Budget Analyst, GS-560-11.