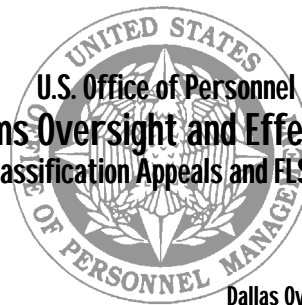


U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



Dallas Oversight Division
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22
Dallas, TX 75242

Classification Appeal Decision
Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [The appellant]

Agency classification: Housing Management Assistant
GS-1173-8

Organization: Family Housing Division
Support Services Directorate
Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base
Fort Worth, Texas

OPM decision: Housing Management Assistant
GS-1173-8

OPM decision number: C-1173-08-01

/s/

Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

02/10/98

Date

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

[The appellant]

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Introduction

On October 1, 1997, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [the appellant]. This position is assigned to the Family Housing Division, Support Services Directorate, Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, in Fort Worth, Texas. The agency classified the position as Housing Management Assistant, GS-1173-8. The appellant disputes the grade of the position; she believes that the standard was incorrectly applied and that the position should be classified at the GS-9 level.

General issues

The appellant compares her position to the Housing Manager, GS-1173-9, position that she held prior to July 20, 1997. She believes her current duties and responsibilities are just as complex as former ones. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their 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 current duties and responsibilities to former ones as a basis for deciding her appeal.

In reaching this classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information obtained during telephone interviews with the appellant and her supervisor and written information provided by the appellant and her agency, including her official position description (PD) 91067.

Position information

The Family Housing Office is a referral office that provides off-base housing services to approximately 3,000 military personnel and Department of Defense civilian employees assigned to military activities at the Naval Air Station (NAS) in Dallas and the NAS Joint Reserve Base (JRB) in Fort Worth. The appellant assists in the management of Government-owned housing units at these locations. Her work involves the following major duties:

- processes and reviews applications for permanent quarters to determine accuracy and completeness of data;
- performs Quality Assurance Evaluator duties on housing work by the Public Works Department;
- conducts joint tenant-management inspections of quarters to evaluate habitability, cleanliness, etc., and follows up where deficiencies are noted;
- counsels prospective and current tenants and handles complaints;
- establishes and maintains liaison with realtors and property owners regarding family housing needs;
- maintains records regarding storage, handling, and inventory of furnishings;
- operates the agency's computerized accounting system (FASTDATA); maintains files on budget figures, payment of housing bills, and requisition of materials; and manages accounting records to ensure that the budget is in line with the annual spending plan;
- assists the Housing Manager with security and legal matters concerning Government residents; and
- procures supplies and services as needed for maintenance projects.

Series, title and standard determination

The appellant's position is best covered by the GS-1173 Housing Management Series. The GS-1173 series covers two broad areas of housing management to include (1) direct management of housing projects and facilities and (2) housing management program evaluation and administration. The authorized title for positions at grade GS-9 and above is Housing Manager. For positions below the GS-9 level, the authorized title is Housing Management Assistant. Since our decision finds the appellant's position to be graded at the GS-8 level, as discussed in the following section, the appropriate title for the appellant's position is Housing Management Assistant.

Grade determination

The GS-1173 standard uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES), which employs nine factors. Under the FES, each factor level description 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. Our evaluation with respect to the nine FES factors follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor identifies the nature and extent of housing management concepts, principles, policies, regulations, procedures, and processes the employee must know to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of skills required to apply the knowledges.

In addition to the knowledges required at lower levels, Level 1-5 requires knowledge of the basic principles, techniques, and methodology pertaining to the management planning, scheduling, coordinating, and efficient use of Government-owned housing facilities. Typical assignments at this level include various standard housing management functions such as periodic housing requirement surveys, joint tenant-management inspections, recommending improvement projects, determining authorized allowances, and reviewing or certifying payment claims for work or services provided. This level also requires a general knowledge of construction, maintenance, repair, and improvement practices and the methods and procedures involved in determining acceptable work performance in various trades or crafts associated with improving housing units, structures, grounds, streets, and utility systems. The employee at this level utilizes knowledges and skills to evaluate adequacy of housing activities such as eligibility determinations, maintainability, terminations, habitability, and utility conservation.

Level 1-6 assignments involve more responsibility for the housing project or projects assigned and the planning, organizing, and administration of housing program requirements. This level requires a knowledge of agency management procedures and general business principles and practices related to the management of Government-owned, leased, rented, or privately-owned housing facilities that are under a variety of rental or leasing agreements. Employees at this level also have direct responsibility for one or more housing projects, facilities, or complexes that usually consist of a number of family dwelling units, individual rooming accommodations, guest quarters, special status residences, or combinations of the above. Skill is required in formulating local occupancy directives, instructions, and brochures and in conducting technical audits or studies. Organizational funding procedures and short-range planning for fund allocation, personnel, or material to accomplish major housing activities are typical at this level.

The appellant's work most closely matches that found at Level 1-5. The appellant provides assistance to the Housing Manager who has direct management responsibility over the major facilities. As typical of Level 1-5, the appellant is also involved in joint tenant-management inspections (preliminary, check-in, and final) and recommending improvement projects and corrective action for approximately 83 units. About 50 of the 83 units are under renovation and are not currently assigned to tenants. In the interim, the appellant determines what work needs to be done and writes contracts for work delivery orders for such actions as painting, carpentry, and repair. Comparable to work at Level 1-5 involving review and certification of payment claims for work or services performed, the appellant spends a substantial amount of time using the FASTDATA system to balance and reconcile accounts, procure supplies and services, and request funds to cover multiple accounts and transactions. The appellant coordinates entries and transactions with the Housing Manager prior to performing and sending reconciliation reports through the Comptroller.

The appellant's position falls short of Level 1-6 because it does not require the increased difficulty and responsibility expected at this level. Although the appellant performs some duties similar to those at the higher level and uses comprehensive knowledge and past experience in the performance of her work, her current position does not entail direct housing management authority over major housing facilities. Instead, she provides assistance to the Housing Manager who has that authority over the housing units at the NAS JRB. The Housing Manager uses input from the appellant and other sources to develop, submit, and administer the overall budget for the program. The appellant is not responsible for policy development or broad management planning and technical studies typical of Level 1-6. Rather, she works under the supervision of the Housing Manager who formulates tenant directives and instructions within the framework of field activity management requirements. Although the appealed position has some characteristics of Level 1-6, it does not require a knowledge of the full range of management procedures, techniques, and methods at that level.

Level 1-5 is credited (750 points).

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

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

At Level 2-3 the supervisor makes housing assignments by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines. The supervisor is available to provide assistance in unprecedented situations. Employees at this level independently perform work and resolve problems in accordance with established instructions, agency policies, or normally accepted housing practices. Review of work is usually for technical soundness of conclusions or decisions, and conformity to policies and existing requirements. Methods and techniques applied are generally not reviewed in detail.

At Level 2-4, the housing supervisor sets the overall objectives and establishes resources available. The employee, in consultation with the supervisor, develops project deadlines, scope, and level of work to be accomplished. This level is characterized by unusually difficult assignments, policy interpretation in terms of established objectives, and determination of alternative approaches. Completed work is reviewed only from an overall viewpoint of meeting requirements and compatibility with other work.

The appellant's position meets Level 2-3. The appellant is made aware of functional responsibility and project objectives. Work is generated from prospective or tenant phone messages, service calls, work schedules, reporting needs, etc. The appellant independently performs most assignments, only referring to the Housing Manager in unusual circumstances such as those that would involve large sums of money, or changing tenant order on a waiting list. The appellant generally keeps the supervisor up to date on ongoing activities. Comparable to Level 2-3, the supervisor occasionally checks the appellant's work by review of the conditions and appearance of the dwelling units and surrounding areas, cost, records, and reports on occupant satisfaction. Supervisory controls for the appealed position do not meet Level 2-4 since the appellant is given expected deadlines, priorities, and the scope of work to be accomplished. Further, the appellant is not required to interpret policy, to determine alternate approaches or methodology to be used in completing assignments, or to resolve most conflicts through negotiation.

Level 2-3 is credited (275 Points).

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply these guidelines (e.g., utilization instructions, management procedures, and agency policy) .

At Level 3-2, the employee is provided with a variety of administrative instructions, management procedures, housing standards, and other established procedural guides that are usually applicable to work assignments. Additionally, specific operating guides concerning habitability, occupancy, maintenance, inspections, surveys, and other related requirements are also available for reference purposes. Selection of appropriate guidelines and references as well as latitude in discretionary selection among alternative approaches is characteristic of Level 3-2.

Level 3-3 describes guidelines that are generally available but are not completely applicable to the specific work assignments or lack sufficient detail regarding pertinent factors such as maintenance, cost control, turnover rates, or other similar elements. Guidelines may include a variety of agencywide regulations, standards, handbooks, and inspection or survey schedules related to major housing activity areas. There is limited detail in guidance at this level on which to base management decisions or actions. The employee at Level 3-3 is frequently required to make selections, compromises, and adaptations in the course of assignments based on sound interpretations of guidance. The employee must evaluate the impact or results of the application of standard agency practices, management criteria, or other parameters related to housing operations and advocate changes to unique situations and housing program deficiencies.

The appellant's guidelines meet Level 3-2. Guidelines consist of manuals and Naval Facility Engineering Command guidelines that give directions on legalities of spending funds, instructions on facility maintenance and other housing rules, and regulations concerning assignments, occupancy, and inspections. These guidelines are usually applicable to the assigned

work, although the appellant may use judgment in selecting appropriate references or suggesting alternatives to established procedures. However, major conflicts, conditions, or questions not covered by the guides are referred to the supervisor.

The appellant's guidelines do not meet Level 3-3. Although the appellant may make recommendations, she is not required to interpret or adapt the guides as would be typical of Level 3-3. The appellant's guidelines and instructions are usually directly applicable to the work.

Level 3-2 is credited (125 Points).

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods involved in the management, operations, and use of housing assets and resources; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

The agency credited level 4-3 for this factor, and we agree with that determination based on the review of the appeal record and information obtained during interviews with the appellant and her supervisor. The complexity of the appellant's position is incorrectly represented in the PD of record. That is, language in the PD describes Level 4-4 rather than Level 4-3. Consequently, the agency must correct the PD so that it accurately reflects the complexity of the appellant's work.

Level 4-3 consists of assignments involving the relative independent performance of numerous standard housing management functions requiring different methods or techniques. Assigned tasks are conventional with clearly identified objectives. An illustration of this complexity level is serving as a member of periodic or special housing survey or audit teams to determine housing requirements; inspecting project facilities, grounds, and utilities as a basis for developing recommendations for maintenance or improvement projects; establishing validity of payment claims; and performing other activities related to use, operation, and management of housing assets. There are established schedules, procedures, or plans for performance of the work. Compliance issues do occur within these parameters where the employee may be required to review case histories, examine management records or perform physical inspections to identify deficiencies, assess damages, and determine appropriate corrective actions. Various conditions and factors must be taken into account during completion of assignments such as the type, age, and size of housing facilities. Some assignments may require evaluation of drawings, plans, or work standards and acceptability of required maintenance or repair activities; or the identification of organizational over-expenditures, duplications, or improper recordkeeping in order to develop recommendations for management action. These elements may often affect problem-solving methods or techniques.

Level 4-4 involves work that consists of continuing assignments involving direct responsibility for the management control of one or more housing projects, facilities, or complexes. The work typically involves the application of the full range of methods and processes related to the planning, acquisition, construction, operation, occupation, maintenance, improvement, and use of a variety of housing assets including Government-owned, assisted, leased, rented, or privately-owned facilities. Decisions regarding what needs to be done require the assessment of such operations as project organization and fiscal management; reporting systems; furnishings, supplies, and equipment; maintenance conditions and general housekeeping; occupancy and assignment activities; and tenant relations. The work usually requires the assessment of such critical project activities as occupancy turnover rates, current and projected operating costs, utility conservation efforts, and structural or physical condition of housing assets. Analysis of problematic areas affecting cost targets and funding requirements for personnel and materials to accomplish housing activities is considered.

The appellant's work contains some elements of Level 4-4 but does not meet the full intent of that level and is therefore credited at Level 4-3. Namely, the appellant assists in the management of Government-owned housing units, but the Housing Manager has direct housing responsibility for the units at NAS JRB. Although the appellant's work involves a number of different facets of broader housing management project assignments, it does not involve the full range of methods and processes related to housing management activities. The appellant is not involved in acquisition of new housing or construction details. She assists in the management of family housing funds ensuring that there are no over-obligations in Budget Project categories. She makes recommendations to the Housing Manager consistent with budget targets, limitations, and deadlines and signs documents for purchasing utilities, GSA supplies, or other small purchases that she is not going to inspect. The appellant informs the supervisor prior to finalizing funding commitments since bottom line fiscal management is assigned to the Housing Manager position. Overall, the appellant's position falls short of Level 4-4.

Level 4-3 is credited (150 Points).

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work in terms of the purpose, breadth, and depth of housing assignments, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-3, the purpose of the work is to plan, schedule, coordinate and/or monitor the operational management and efficient use of housing projects, facilities, and resources; analyze problem areas; and recommend or implement corrective actions within required housing program parameters. A variety of occupancy related problems are considered. The employee at this level evaluates the adequacy of services provided, efficiency of housing program operations, and family living conditions.

The purpose of the work at Level 5-4 is to provide expertise as a specialist in housing management techniques and methodology by furnishing advisory services to other agency organizations on specific problems, projects, programs, and functions. The work involves the development of management plans and criteria related to the application of agency housing policies. Major segments and activity areas of the agency's housing policies and programs are affected by work produced by employees at this level.

The appellant's position has a similar scope and effect to that described at Level 5-3. The appellant's work involves assisting in planning, scheduling, and coordinating the management and utilization of housing projects or facilities. The appellant's work, which involves evaluating, resolving problems, and providing corrective action and follow-up, affects the adequacy and effectiveness of project operations and the well being of the families housed.

Level 5-4 is not met in that the appellant does not have the key role of providing advisory services to other agency organizations on specific problems, projects, or programs. Further, the appellant is not expected to develop housing management plans and criteria related to the application of agency housing policies.

Level 5-3 is credited (150 Points).

Factor 6, Personal contacts

This factor includes face-to-face contacts, telephone, or other dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place.

Level 6-3 contacts are generally those described at the lower level (e.g., applicants; tenants; dependents; or various headquarters, regional or field personnel) plus a variety of management officials and representatives of public, private, and law enforcement agencies; housing committees; contractor representatives; and officials of professional business organizations. Basically, the contacts are at the employee's workplace, meeting facilities, or other locations where meetings have been scheduled.

The appellant's contacts are comparable to Level 6-3 in that they typically include housing applicants, tenants, dependents, contract and field personnel, and others. The setting is also a match since most of the appellant's contacts are at the employee's work site and conference or meeting facilities. Level 6-4 exceeds the appellant's position in that she is not expected to meet with high ranking officials from outside the agency such as Members of Congress, nationally recognized housing officials, State governors, city mayors, and similar persons of this rank or stature. Also, the appellant's contacts are in more structured settings than the highly unstructured settings depicted at Level 6-4, such as unscheduled problem-related visits or special investigation hearings.

Level 6-3 is credited (60 Points).

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

The personal contacts which serve as the basis for the level selected for this factor must be the same as the contacts which are the basis for the level selected for Factor 6.

The purpose of contacts at Level 7-3 is to influence or persuade agency or local housing specialists, tenants, and local special interest committees or groups to accept plans, schedules, technical or policy requirements, and methods that are somewhat conflicting; or to negotiate or mediate agreement among conflicting parties; to cooperate with and coordinate law enforcement efforts; or to justify the feasibility or validity of proposals concerning housing facilities or resources to agency officials or committees comprised of housing specialists and others with approval authority. Some skepticism and lack of cooperation may be encountered.

Similar to Level 7-3, the purpose of the appellant's contacts is to provide assistance to the Housing Manager and work with local housing communities to plan and coordinate effective and efficient operation and utilization of housing facilities. Contacts with security personnel, family advisory services, and other law enforcement officials are to deter domestic violence, juvenile delinquency and break-ins.

Level 7-4 exceeds the appellant's position since the purpose at this level is mainly to justify, defend, negotiate, or settle significant or highly controversial matters pertaining to housing policies or program. This often involves presenting agency goals and objectives at professional conferences or committees convened to plan long-range housing programs and develop standards and guides for broad activities. Such activities would be found in the Housing Manger position or even higher levels of management within the agency.

Level 7-3 is credited (120 Points).

Factor 8, Physical demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on housing managers, specialists, and assistants by the work assignments.

The appellant's position exceeds Level 8-1 which describes work that is primarily sedentary although some walking, standing, bending, or carrying of light items may be required. The appellant's position best matches Level 8-2 where the work requires some physical exertion involved in frequent on-site visits to project locations to conduct inspections of housing facilities, building, or grounds. The work also requires long periods of standing, walking over sometimes uneven surfaces, climbing stairs, and bending, reaching, or similar activities. This level is descriptive of the physical demands placed on the appellant in carrying out her day-to-day activities which may involve site visits, meetings, and inspections.

Level 8-2 is credited (20 Points).

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor covers the risks, discomforts, or unpleasantness that may be imposed upon employees by various physical surroundings, environmental conditions, or job situations including the use of safety gear or devices.

Level 9-1 describes work that involves normal risks or discomforts associated with an office environment where the work area has proper ventilation and lighting. There may be occasional exposure to dusty or dirty conditions while visiting housing units or facilities undergoing repair, maintenance, or renovation. The appellant's position meets the Level 9-1 description. Most of her work is done in a comfortable office setting; however, she may occasionally encounter moderate discomforts or conditions when visiting grounds or conducting inspections of units or repair services.

Level 9-2 is not met since her position does not require frequent exposure to moderate discomforts, risks, or unpleasantness such as high level noises and vibrations, dust and grease, irritant fluids or fumes, moving parts of machines, and external weather conditions. Her work does not require use of protective garments or devices such as hats, masks, boots, goggles, or shields when visiting construction sites. Sites visited by the appellant are usually housing facilities (some may be under renovation), rather than construction sites that contain all the harsher environmental elements described at this level.

Level 9-1 is credited (5 Points).

Summary

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

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-3	750
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-4	150
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. Personal contacts	6-3	60
7. Purpose of contacts	7-3	120
8. Physical demands	8-2	20
9. Work environment	9-1	5
Total points:		1655

The appellant's position warrants 1655 total points. Therefore, in accordance with the grade conversion table on page 10 of the standard, the appealed position is properly graded at GS-8.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Housing Management Assistant, GS-1173-8.