

**U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Classification Appeal Decision  
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code**

**Appellant:** [Name of appellant]

**Agency classification:** Budget Analyst  
GS-560-11

**Organization:** [Appellant's organization/work location]  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

**OPM decision:** Budget Analyst  
GS-560-11

**OPM decision number:** C-0560-11-04

//Linda Kazinetz for

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Robert D. Hendler  
Classification and Pay Claims  
Program Manager  
Merit System Audit and Compliance

3/29/2012

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Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate, which 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 (Introduction)*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

As indicated in this decision, our findings show the appellant's official position description (PD) does not meet the standard of adequacy described in section III.E. of the *Introduction*. Since PDs must meet the standard of adequacy, the agency must revise the appellant's PD to reflect our findings. The servicing human resources office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected PD within 30 days of the date of this decision to San Francisco Oversight.

**Decision sent to:**

[Appellant's mailing address]

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## Introduction

On May 18, 2011, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) San Francisco Oversight accepted a classification appeal from [name of appellant]. On June 17, 2011, we received the complete agency administrative report (AAR). The appellant's position is currently classified as Budget Analyst, GS-560-11, but she believes the scope of her responsibilities warrants upgrading the position to the GS-12 level. The appellant works at the [appellant's organization/work location], U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in [name of city]. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## General issues

The appellant makes various statements about her agency's evaluation of her position and compares her duties to higher graded budget analyst positions in her department. In adjudicating this appeal, our responsibility is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of her position. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing her 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 others that may or may not be properly classified, as a basis for deciding her appeal. Because our decision sets aside all previous agency decisions, the appellant's concerns regarding her agency's classification review process are not germane to this decision.

Like OPM, the appellant's agency must classify positions based on comparison to OPM standards and guidelines. However, the agency also has primary responsibility for ensuring that its positions are classified consistently with OPM appeal decisions. If the appellant considers her position so similar to others that they all warrant the same classification, she may pursue the matter by writing to her agency's human resources headquarters. In doing so, she should specify the precise organizational location, classification, duties, and responsibilities of the positions in question. If the positions are found to be basically the same as hers, the agency must correct their classification to be consistent with this appeal decision. Otherwise, the agency should explain to her the differences between her position and the others.

The appellant states that due to a re-organization in her agency in 2008, work shifted resulting in the assignment to her of more duties and increase in workload including performing financial monitoring and providing advice to staff of Forests within the region. However, volume of work cannot be considered in determining the grade of a position (*The Classifier's Handbook, chapter 5*). The appellant mentions her personal qualifications, including her degree in accounting and previous Federal experience in that field as supporting factors for a higher grade. Qualifications are considered in classifying positions. However, these are qualifications required to perform current duties and responsibilities, not qualifications that appellants personally possess. Therefore, we could not consider the appellant's personal qualifications, except insofar as they were required to perform her current duties and responsibilities. To the extent they are needed for this purpose, we carefully considered them along with all other information furnished by the appellant and her agency, including her official PD.

**Position information**

Both the appellant and her immediate supervisor have certified to the accuracy of the appellant's official PD [number]. However, our fact-finding disclosed the discussion of the appellant's personal contacts (Factor 6) in her PD is inaccurate. As discussed later in this decision, the appellant does not have contacts with employees of outside agencies and organizations. Therefore, the appellant's PD does not meet the standard of adequacy addressed on pages 10-11 of the *Introduction*, and the agency must revise the PD to reflect our findings.

The [name of region] manages over twenty million acres of National Forest Land in [name of state] and encompasses eighteen National Forests. The appellant is one of the regional budget analysts responsible for performing budgetary functions and duties for the eighteen Forests in the region, and solely furnishes budget support to the Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) (unit 21).

The appellant performs budget analysis, reporting, monitoring expenditures, and re-programming. In carrying out these functions, she monitors and reports on fund activities, compares projected versus actual expenditures, and tracks obligations to ensure actions do not exceed established limits. For example, she is responsible for managing funds allocated to the FAM (unit 21), including ensuring amounts allocated are properly reflected in the unit Work Plan, so she can review and approve requests for contracts and grants and agreements (G&A). The appellant also ensures requisition amounts do not exceed the budget authority for the program before making approvals through the Integrated Acquisition System (contracts) and I-Web G&A, and prepares monthly reports of expenditures. This entails reviewing actual budget authority, commitments, obligations, and expenditures, and computing the rate of spending for each program in order to identify units that may have exceeded their projected rate of expenditures. These reports are distributed to the FAM Director, staff and other budget contacts to inform them of their budget status and future activities that may affect funding. She also prepares reports on travel for this unit.

The appellant acts as the Region/Station/Area (RSA) Job Code Approver for the region. In this capacity, she is responsible for reviewing expenditures, verifying that all commitments have been charged to the appropriate job code, and that funds are available. She also ensures requests for job code exceptions are necessary and proper, and prepares monthly reports on the financial position (status of funds) of all programs within the region. Additionally, the appellant provides advice and assistance to units by responding to requests for information pertaining to specific issues raised by internal and external customers. For example, she provides the Forests with information to assist them in understanding how to gather and use data from the Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS) accounting system and I-Web G&A system to manage their local budgets. In addition, upon receipt of requests from the agency's Washington Office, she researches inactive obligations by reviewing associated transactional actions from different databases and advises units to close or de-obligate such transactions, as needed. She also analyzes adjustments to prior year accounts after researching which programs were involved.

The appellant is responsible for re-programming the funds of her assigned units. This involves making recommendations to program managers to re-program funds between accounts and

forwarding requests for approval to program directors. Once requests are approved she reprograms the funds. The appellant also documents resolution of requisition errors occurring in the Integrated Acquisition System (IAS). These include errors such as wrong job codes for the current fiscal year, missing object class codes, lack of funds, or use of incorrect unit numbers. After identifying the error, the appellant contacts the party responsible for correction before resubmitting to the IAS.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information provided by the appellant and her agency, including her official PD which, although not completely accurate, we have incorporated by reference into this decision. In addition, to help decide the appeal we conducted separate telephone interviews with the appellant and her supervisor.

### **Series, title, and standard determination**

The agency has classified the appellant's position in the Budget Analysis Series, GS-560, titling it Budget Analyst and the appellant does not disagree. We concur with the agency's title and series determination. Positions in the GS-560 series are evaluated by application of the grading criteria in the Job Family Position Classification Standard (JFS) for Professional and Administrative Work in the Accounting and Budget Group, GS-0500. We have applied those criteria below to the appellant's position.

### **Grade determination**

The GS-0500 JFS is written in Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, which employs nine factors. Under the FES, each factor-level in a standard 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 unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect that meets a higher level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion table in the JFS.

The appellant disagrees with her agency's assignment from the GS-0500 JFS of Factor Levels 3-3, 5-3, and 7-2. She concurs with the agency's assignment of Levels of 1-7, 2-4, 4-4, 6-3, 8-1, and 9-1. After careful review, we concur with the agency's assignment of Factor Levels 1-7, 2-4, 4-4, 8-1, and 9-1, thus have not specifically addressed them in our discussion that follows. Therefore, our evaluation is limited to those factor levels in dispute including our assessment of Factor 6, Personal Contacts, in which we disagree with the agency.

#### *Factor 3, Guidelines*

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment employees need to apply them. Guidelines either provide reference data or impose certain constraints on applications. At Level 3-3, the employee uses guidelines that typically provide a preferred approach or describe generally accepted standards rather than precisely delineating requirements. Consequently, a situation may require a level of detail or scope of instruction that is greater than

what the guidelines provide. Examples of guidelines in the JFS applicable to budget work at this level include: (1) handbooks developed at higher echelons covering a range of agency accounting, finance, or budget operations, and which may provide suggestions and goals for increasing effective advisory services to management, as well as procedures that the employee must either implement or consider in establishing local office practices; and (2) a handbook of characteristics and specifications for a new automated accounting or financial information system where the manual is incomplete in covering many minor problems that arise. At Level 3-3, the employee uses judgment to adapt the guidelines to specific cases or problems and/or to interpret a large number of varied policies and regulations.

At Level 3-4, the employee typically works in situations where guidelines and policies are scarce and very general in nature; pertain only to routine issues and matters; are stated in terms of goals to be accomplished rather than the approach to be taken; and present a number of principles and standards any one of which may reasonably apply to the broad subject matter. At this level, documentation of work done in earlier assignments is not available or is not applicable because of changes in subject matter, objectives, or emphasis. Examples of such guidelines are: (1) OMB circulars, directives and regulations, and Treasury Department regulations; (2) judicial decisions and Comptroller General Decisions; (3) the employing agency's broad program goals and policy statements that describe only the purpose for which a program or system was established; (4) requirements that define general specifications for management and financial systems or the parameters from which an accounting system is to be defined. At Level 3-4, the employee routinely develops specific objectives and devises new methods, techniques, and criteria pertaining to such matters as: identifying trends and patterns; acquiring information and analyzing data, modifying systems to accept new kinds of data; developing solutions and presenting findings; and examining returns for which there are no precedents. The employee may interpret available guidance for employees at the same or subordinate levels.

The appellant's position meets Level 3-3. Like this level, the appellant uses a variety of statutes, policies, regulations and guidelines that provide a preferred approach or generally describe a standard method without precisely delineating requirements. Examples include Federal, USDA and budgetary regulations and rulings. In many cases, these guidelines do not fully cover a particular situation so the appellant must interpret and adapt them to the budgetary issue at hand. For example, as an RSA Job Code Approver the appellant approves job codes established by the U.S. Forest Service Job Code Structure Guide. In doing so, she must interpret the guidelines to verify the correctness of the job code type, fund, and associated program, ensuring that requests for exceptions to unified codes are justified according to her interpretation of the Job Code Structure Guide instructions. The appellant also interprets the Budget Object Classification Code (BOC) Manual, which lists the budget classifications used by agencies and departments serviced by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) to determine the validity of the BOC used when resolving rejected acquisitions. In addition, as budget approver for contracts and G&A, the appellant interprets general guidance provided to the regions by the agency's program and budget office to verify project fund/authority and ensure proper expenditure within prescribed limits.

Like Level 3-3, the appellant interprets a large number of varied policies and regulations. For example, the appellant is responsible for making recommendations to program managers for re-

programming funds between accounts, but guidelines do not specifically explain how to re-program funds to accommodate shortages or surpluses in budget accounts. Consequently, the appellant reviews and interprets individual project financial plans basing her recommendations to program managers on her analysis of funds and accounts needed to support accomplishment of planned operations and meet program requirements. In other instances, the appellant must interpret and adapt appropriation law (REDBOOK) to ensure items are purchased using the proper funds and the region does not violate any Federal fiscal laws. She also applies and interprets funding constraints stated in the Anti-deficiency Act, which prohibits making or authorizing obligations beyond what is appropriated.

The position does not meet Level 3-4. Unlike this level, while many of the guidelines available to the appellant provide only general information, they are not scarce or stated in terms of only goals to be accomplished. Although the appellant occasionally refers to Comptroller General or judicial decision, the record shows this is not done on a regular and recurring basis as envisioned at Level 3-4. While the appellant prepares and analyzes a variety of financial reports in order to compare actual fiscal performance with budget estimates, unlike Level 3-4 she does not routinely develop specific objectives and devise new methods, techniques and criteria to identify trends, acquire information, or modify systems as envisioned at the higher level. Moreover, although the appellant reviews policies and procedural changes to determine the impact these changes may have on program funding and develops standard operating procedures for use by staff in her unit, she does not interpret available guidance for employees at the same or subordinate levels as described at Level 3-4.

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

#### *Factor 5, Scope and effect*

This factor covers the relationships between the nature of work, i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment) and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-3, the scope of work involves independently conducting a variety of tasks in limited functional areas. The employee uses standard methods to resolve conventional problems and issues. For example, employees working in budget analysis apply specific budgetary rules, regulations, principles, and procedures associated with all phases of budget formulation and execution related to segments of the budget for assigned support activities. The work affects information on the amount, timeliness and availability of funds. Work outcomes include information on the amount, timeliness, and availability of funds for items such as personnel salaries and expenses, routine maintenance and similar administrative support activities in appropriated or industrially funded organizations.

At Level 5-4, the scope of the work involves executing modifications to systems, programs, and/or operations, and/or establishing criteria and other means to assess, investigate, or analyze a variety of unusual problems and conditions. Work involves a wide range of agency activities or the operations of other agencies, or the activities of private sector entities with which the agency conducts business or provides services. For example, employees working in budget analysis

formulate and/or monitor the execution of long-range (i.e., 3 to 5 years or longer) detailed budget forecasts and plans to fund the implementation of substantive agency programs and projects. The work includes establishing financial and budgetary goals, timetables, milestones, and other criteria against which the relative costs and benefits of program achievements can be measured. Programs supported involve such matters as the production and distribution of goods, construction, or the delivery of services to the public. Budget analysis at Level 5-4 may include planning the timely acquisition and use of funds through time-phased allotments and transfers of funds; adjusting long-range budget forecasts and monitoring their execution for assigned substantive programs; and analyzing costs, benefits, and trends in rates of obligation and expenditure funds. The effect of the work involves outcomes such as the amount and availability of funds for major substantive or administrative programs and services; or the budgets, programs, and interests of other Federal agencies.

The appellant's position meets Level 5-3. Like this level, the appellant's work involves independently conducting a variety of budgetary tasks encompassing all phases of budget formulation and execution in support of limited regional functional areas, e.g., unit 21. In accordance with budgetary rules and regulations, the appellant uses standard budget methods and techniques to resolve a range of conventional problems and issues. For example, she reviews budget lines with negative amounts and assists in making adjustments (e.g., deficit in an ARRA program), determines proper application of funds, provides budgetary advice and recommendations to management, approves job codes, and re-programs funds as needed. Like Level 5-3, the appellant's work affects the accuracy of information on the amount, timeliness, and availability of program funds including salaries and expenses, supplies, and services.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 5-4. Unlike this level, the appellant's work does not involve executing modifications to programs or operations, or establishing criteria to assess and analyze a variety of unusual problems and conditions. In contrast to Level 5-4, she is not concerned with a wide range of agency activities or the operations of other agencies, and does not formulate and/or monitor the execution of long-range (i.e., 3 to 5 years) detailed budget forecasts. Although the appellant makes recommendations for the re-programming of funds between accounts to support the accomplishment of planned operations and meet program requirements, she does not establish goals, timelines, milestones, and other criteria against which the relative costs and benefits of program achievements can be measured. While she is concerned with the effectiveness and budgetary impact of costs, unlike Level 5-4 the scope of her work does not include determining the benefit of such costs. Rather, her work is limited to assessing throughout the fiscal year whether funds allocated are sufficient to support the achievement of established program goals. In addition, the appellant's work does not involve assessing, investigating, or analyzing a variety of unusual problems and conditions within the context of Level 5-4.

This factor is evaluated at Level 5-3 and 150 points are credited.

#### *Factors 6 and 7, Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts*

These factors include face-to-face and remote dialogue (e.g., telephone, e-mail, and video conferences) with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under these factors



consider what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, the setting in which the contact takes place, and the nature of the discourse. The setting describes how well the employee and those contacted recognize their relative roles and authorities. The nature of the discourse defines the reason for the communication and the context or environment in which the communication takes place. The JFS notes the same contacts are evaluated for both Factors 6 and 7. The total point value for these factors is obtained by applying the Point Assignment Chart in the JFS.

### Personal Contacts

At Level 2, contacts are with employees in the agency, both inside and outside the immediate organization such as management support personnel in budget, accounting, financial management, human resources and information technology offices. Contacts also include personnel from various levels within the agency such as headquarters, regions, districts or field offices or other operating offices in the immediate installations.

At Level 3, contacts are with executives, officials, managers, professionals and employees of other agencies and outside organizations and businesses. Contacts are not routine or recurring. Participants must recognize or learn the role and authority of each party during the course of the meeting. Examples include representatives of contractors; attorneys and accountants of business firms; representatives of state and local governments; administrators, professors, and staff of universities and hospitals; other Federal agencies, including OMB representatives; various levels of agency management such as policy review boards at higher levels in the agency; and/or Congressional or Executive Branch staff members making inquiries on behalf of constituents.

The appellant's position meets Level 2. Like this level, her contacts are with employees in the agency, both inside and outside the immediate organization. These include contacts with various levels of agency management from [name of region], the ASC, the headquarters Washington office and the OCFO such as the FAM Director and Deputy, Forest Supervisors, program managers, budget officers, contracting officers, accountants and other budget analysts, and financial staff inside and outside her region. For example, at the end of the fiscal year when performing "budget clean-up," she makes various contacts with a number of internal regional officials concerned with reconciling and closing out their respective budgets. Moreover, upon request by the Washington Office to resolve a cash balance problem, she contacts the appropriate program individual within the region to resolve the problem. When reviewing un-liquidated obligations that have been inactive for twelve months or more, the appellant reviews the history of the transaction from FFIS, IAS or I-Web to identify the person who obligated the original transaction and contacts that person to request the item be de-obligated or closed.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 3. Unlike this level, she does not have contact with officials, managers, executives of other agencies and outside organizations such as Congressional or Executive Branch staff members, OMB representatives and various levels of agency management including policy review boards at higher levels in the agency.

### Purpose of Contacts

At Level B, the purpose of contacts is to plan, arrange, coordinate, or advise on work efforts and/or arrange for interviews and meetings to obtain information; and, as required, obtain data to verify questionable items. Through differences of opinion may exist, the persons contacted are usually working toward a common goal and generally are cooperative. Contacts at this level are for the purpose of explaining the significance of guidelines, the appropriateness of , recommendations, the necessity for additional facts; the preferred course of action including preferred methods of data gathering; resolving problems related to assignment of responsibility; coordinating the technical support of subject-matter experts, and answering questions and issues.

At Level C, the purpose of contacts is to influence, motivate, interrogate, or control persons or groups when there is wide disagreement on the merits of a proposed action, or when persons contacted are fearful, or uncooperative. For example, persuading 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/financial management policies, objectives, or regulations.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts meets Level B. Like this level, the purpose of the appellant's contacts is to resolve budget and fiscal problems, and advise managers on fiscal activities such as status of funds availability and re-programming actions. Similar to Level B, the appellant contacts individuals to gather additional facts, resolve problems related to assignment of responsibility, and recommend a preferred course of action when budget shortfalls or re-programming is required. In other instances, the appellant contacts program managers to respond to inquiries and provide assistance or recommendations on measures to ensure compliance with work plans and avoid overspending. She also deals with supervisors in resolving problems related to rejected requisitions or negative cash balances. Like Level B, persons contacted are usually working toward the same goals and are generally cooperative.

The position does not meet Level C. Unlike this level, in making contacts to resolve fiscal problems such as rejection of requisitions and un-liquidated obligations, the appellant does not need to influence, motivate, interrogate, or control persons or groups who may be fearful or uncooperative. The appellant's supervisor confirmed that when seeking guidance and assistance the appellant's contacts are usually cooperative, and she is not faced with influencing or persuading program managers who have decision making authority but hold widely differing goals and interests to follow recommended courses of action consistent with budget policies, objectives, or regulations.

By application of the Point Assignment Chart in the JFS, a combination of Level 2 for Factor 6 and Level B for Factor 7 results in a total of 75 points assigned.

*Summary*

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
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	5-3	150
6. & 7 Personal Contacts/Purpose of Contacts	6-2/7-B	75
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
<i>Total</i>		2435

A total of 2435 points falls within the GS-11 range (2355-2750) on the Grade Conversion Table in the JFS. Therefore, the appellant's position is graded at the GS-11 level.

**Decision**

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