

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



Atlanta Oversight Division
75 Spring Street, Suite 972
Atlanta, GA 30303-3109

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

Appellant: [appellants' names]

Agency classification: Civil Engineering Technician
GS-802-9

Organization: Specific Work Planning Branch
Facility Planning Division
Facility Management Department
Navy Public Works Center
[city, state]

OPM Decision: GS-802-9
Civil Engineering Technician

OPM decision number: C-0802-09-08

Kathy W. Day
Classification Appeals Officer

2/13/98_____
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:

[appellants' representative]

[name]

Director, Human Resources Office

Naval Base

[address]

Mr. William Duffy

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Introduction

On July 8, 1997, the Atlanta Oversight Division, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted an appeal for the position of Civil Engineering Technician, GS-802-9, Specific Work Planning Branch, Facility Planning Division, Facility Management Department, Navy Public Works Center, [city, state]. The appellants are requesting that their position be changed to Civil Engineering Technician, GS-802-11.

The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.). This is the final administrative decision on the classification of the position subject to discretionary review only under the limited conditions and time outlined in part 511, subpart F, of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

General issues

These appellants are part of a group appeal from engineering technicians at the Navy Public Works Center who perform work in various specializations. Information furnished with the group appeal compares their GS-9 positions with other engineering technician positions at the same location whom they believe are performing the equivalent work or below but are classified at a higher grade. Copies of position descriptions were provided for two Mechanical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11, positions; one Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11, position; and one Electronics Engineering Technician, GS-856-11, position. Although the GS-11 position descriptions are certified by a management official, none have a classification certification or a position description number on the Optional Form 8. A certification by a management official certifies the accuracy of the position description which represents the official record of the duties and responsibilities assigned to a position. However, a classification certification indicates the position description has been placed in its proper class, title and grade in accordance with the OPM classification standards and guidelines by a person delegated classification authority. Since the GS-11 position descriptions lack a classification certification, the duties and responsibilities are not an official record of duties and responsibilities, have not been properly classified, and are neither reviewable nor appealable under the classification appeal process. Additionally, 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 appellants' position to others as a basis for deciding their appeal.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellants, the appellants' representative, and the agency, including information obtained from telephone interviews with the appellants and their supervisor.

Position information

The appellants are assigned to Position Number 7L139. The appellants, supervisor, and agency have certified to the accuracy of the position description. However, during telephone interviews, both the appellants and their supervisor confirmed several instances where the position description does not accurately reflect the duties and responsibilities of the position. For example, the Duties and

Responsibilities summary paragraph states “The incumbent prepares scoping and fundable estimates and minor and specific job plans for work requested . . . for the maintenance, repair, new construction, and rehabilitation of real property and equipment, including investigation of accepted maintenance and repair standards established by NAVFAC design criteria and/or equipment manufacturers for the maintenance of real property. The work includes preparation of project specifications for real property systems including: housing, messing, recreational, utility, and miscellaneous buildings; improved and unimproved grounds; storm drainage systems, streets, roads, parking, storage and working areas; trestles and towers; trackage (railroad and crane); tanks; reservoirs; fences; and piers, wharves, breakwaters, seawalls, quaywalls, causeways, moorings, camels and floats.” Based on our interviews, the appellants are not involved with any aspect of this type of work. Similarly, under Section A, Initial Assessment, Planning, and Estimating, the position description states “Investigates, analyzes, and resolves problems pertaining to the design, installation, maintenance, operation or repair of electrical systems.” Again, our interviews determined that the appellants are not involved with this type of work.

The nature and variety of work performed by the appellants relates solely to ceremonies, retirements, ship commissionings and decommissionings, homecomings, changes of command, and dedications of buildings in the Portsmouth, Norfolk, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, Newport News and Hampton, Virginia areas, and occasionally extending as far as New York. The appellants are the principal points-of-contact for all of the above listed events. They initiate and schedule onsite conferences with activities to determine the nature of the event, make appropriate recommendations, take measurements and identify all safety factors. They enter the ceremonies database computer program to input ceremony information such as activity, date, type, location, activity cost, overhead cost, and shop hours generated. They prepare detailed, itemized, fundable estimates for military activities with all setup and removal of equipment, decorations, platforms, stages, etc. They plan the work assignments to be accomplished by Public Works Center (PWC) personnel and outside contractors according to the size of the ceremony. The appellants advise on the appropriate type of funding to be used for the ceremony and channels for approval. They assign job order numbers to facilitate ordering of materials and write applicable job plans. Specific work and job plans are prepared for work to be accomplished with PWC personnel in conjunction with contractors. The appellants task work centers to accomplish the construction of platforms, stages and stairways, fabrication of screens, directional signs and logos, installation of decorations, public address systems, lighting and transformers. They oversee work performed by contractors for decorating reception areas including tables, artificial and live plants, flowers and shrubs, activity logos, ship and submarine replicas, lighting, stages, platforms, chairs, generators, port-a-paths, heaters, tents, centers, carpeting, etc. The appellants plan and execute the workload for the PWC Support Work Centers, setting deadlines, establishing priorities, and evaluating PWC support personnel onsite.

Person-to-person contacts for ceremonies include Command and Executive level Army, Navy, Marine and Coast Guard personnel, as well as representatives of state and local governments to facilitate the planning and execution of the ceremony. When the occasion demands, e.g., when Presidential family members are involved, these contacts may include the Secret Service. Ceremonies occur inside or outside, at ship piers and occasionally onboard ship. Frequently the appellants design platforms for

media cameras, platforms for guests at commissioning ceremonies, and dance floors. In the event the President or members of the First Family are scheduled for attendance, the platforms must accommodate bullet proof glass and emergency exits must be provided.

Standards Determination

Engineering Technician Series, GS-802, June 1969.
 Interior Design Series, GS-1008, June, 1997.
 Exhibits Specialist Series, GS-1010, June, 1997.
 Public Affairs Series, GS-1035, June, 1997.
 Visual Information Series, GS-1084, June 1997.
 Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303, January 1979.
 Grade Evaluation Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work, June 1989.

Series Determination

The agency placed the position in the Engineering Technician Series, GS-802. The appellants do not contest the occupational series or title of their position.

The GS-802 series includes positions that require primarily application of a practical knowledge of (a) the methods and techniques of engineering or architecture; and (b) the construction, application, properties, operation and limitations of engineering systems, processes, structures, machinery, devices and materials. The positions do not require professional knowledge and abilities for full performance and, therefore, do not require training equivalent in type and scope to that represented by the completion of a professional degree in engineering or architecture. This position includes duties such as construction, fabrication, and installation of stages, platforms, stairways, screens, lighting and sound systems, etc., which are appropriately classified in the GS-802 series. However, it also involves a number of duties outside the scope of the work described in the GS-802 series. To ensure that this position is placed in an occupational series appropriate for the unusual combination of administrative, coordinative and technical skills required to plan, coordinate and execute a variety of official ceremonies, we have conducted an intensive review of the occupational series included in the Handbook of Occupational Groups and Series.

Although some aspects of several occupational series touched or bordered on the kinds of skills found in this position, none truly encompassed the work involved. For example, the Exhibits Specialist, GS-1010, performs work related to the production of two and three dimensional displays of art work, historical and scientific artifacts intended to inform, train, convince, or entertain. They also preserve and restore historic structures and large scale museum objects. The ship logos and submarine replicas and other works of similar artistic nature obtained, produced or reproduced for ship side or ship board ceremonies is neither the same nature or quality of work typical of the Exhibits Specialist. Similarly, this position does not perform the extensive, in-depth work typical of the Illustrator, GS-1020, or the Visual Information Specialist, GS-1084. Although some rough sketches are necessary to impart the general theme of decorating desired for a particular ceremony, these sketches or rough

drawings are intended to convey an example of the kind of platform, insignia or design desired which someone else may capture and convert into a finished product. The work performed here is not as extensive, intense, or for the same purpose as that typical of the GS-1010, GS-1020, or GS-1084 series.

Because of the extensive person-to-person contacts and the high visibility of each ceremonial event, we considered the Public Affairs Series, GS-1035. Positions in this series are primarily concerned with advising management on the formulation and articulation of agency policy and designing, executing, and evaluating the information programs that communicate agency policies, programs, and actions to various internal and external publics. Public Affairs Specialists function in a wide variety of ways including conducting the public affairs program of an agency or organization, developing and disseminating informational material to the public, and/or providing informational material to agency employees including planning, designing and conducting awards and special recognition programs. The purpose and nature of the work performed by the Public Affairs Specialist is much broader than the work performed by the appellants, therefore, this series is also inappropriate.

In addition to their engineering technician work, the appellants perform work associated with arranging for equipment, space, decorations, flowers, food, etc., for various ceremonies. It is necessary to determine if these duties are appropriately considered one-grade interval support work or two-grade interval administrative work in order to determine the proper series allocation for these duties. Employees who perform support work follow established methods and procedures even though they may develop work plans or new procedures for their own individual work. Support work can be performed based on a practical knowledge of the purpose, operation, procedures, techniques and guidelines of the particular functional assignment. Support personnel typically learn to do the work on the job through what may sometimes be many years of experience. They also may attend specific training courses related to their work. Administrative work, on the other hand, primarily requires a high order of analytical ability combined with a comprehensive knowledge of (1) the functions, processes, theories, and principles of management; and (2) the methods used to gather, analyze, and evaluate information. Administrative positions do not require specialized education, but they do involve the type of skills (analyses, research, writing, judgment) typically gained through college level education or through progressively responsible experience. The appellants' duties are more closely aligned with support work. They have developed their expertise over a period of time and many of the procedures and techniques they follow come from established methods and practical knowledge or are based on particular guidelines which can be made available to them, e.g., the security procedures which must be in place for the President or other dignitaries and which are available from White House staff, Secret Service; what funding sources may be used for associated expenses, etc. The type of knowledges and skills the appellants use in their position is not equivalent to that described for administrative positions. The GS-303, Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, includes positions the duties of which are to perform or supervise clerical, assistant, or technician work for which no other series is appropriate. The work requires a knowledge of the procedures and techniques involved in carrying out the work of an organization and involves application of procedures and practices within the framework of established guidelines. The support duties are best covered by the GS-303 series.

A “mixed series” position involves work covered by more than one occupational series. For most positions, the grade-controlling work determines the series. However, when the work of the position falls into more than one occupational group, the proper series may be difficult to determine. A number of factors must be considered in order to reach a logical determination including: *Paramount knowledge required* (the most important type of subject-matter knowledge or experience required to do the work); *Reason for existence* (the primary purpose of the position); *Organizational function* (the mission of the organization where the position is located); *Line of promotion* (the normal line of promotion for the position); and *Recruitment source* (the occupational areas that provide the best qualified applicants to do the work). Taking these factors into consideration, the engineering technician work is considered the logical and proper series for this position. The position is located in the PWC which is responsible for the maintenance, repair, alteration, and conversion of facilities. The paramount knowledge is that associated with constructing the necessary stages, platforms, stairways, exits, etc., needed to conduct ceremonies on ships, piers, and other locations. The GS-802 series would, therefore, provide the best qualified applicants for the job.

The GS-802 series is determined to be the most appropriate series for the position.

Title Determination

The title Civil Engineering Technician applies to positions that involve work concerned with buildings, structures, dams, soil mechanics, tunnels, highways, water resources, bridges, airports, railways, and other phases of civil engineering. The appellants’ duties include construction of platforms, stages and stairways; fabrication of screens, directional signs and logos; and installation of decorations, public address systems, lighting and transformers which are covered by the definition for civil engineering. Their title is, therefore, Civil Engineering Technician.

Grade Determination

Engineering Technician Duties

The engineering technician duties are evaluated by reference to the Engineering Technician Series, GS-802.

The grading criteria in the GS-802 standard is written in the narrative format. Grade levels are discussed in terms of two factors: (1) Nature of Assignment, and (2) Level of Responsibility. The position is evaluated as follows:

Nature of Assignment

This factor considers the scope and difficulty of the project, and the skills and knowledge required to complete the assignment.

At the GS-9 level, engineering technicians typically perform a variety of work relating to an area of specialization that requires the application of a considerable number of different basic but established methods, procedures, and techniques. Assignments usually involve independent responsibility for the planning and conduct of a block of work which is a complete conventional project of relatively limited scope, or a portion of a larger and more diverse project. Assignments require study, analysis, and consideration of several possible courses of action, techniques, general layouts, or designs, and selection of the most appropriate. This generally requires consideration of numerous precedents and some adaptation of previous plans or techniques. Often changes or deviations must be made during the progress of an assignment to incorporate additional factors requested after commencement of the project or to adjust to findings and conclusions which could not be predicted accurately in the original plans. The GS-9 assignments typically require coordination of several parts, each requiring independent analysis and solution. When phases or details of the project are performed by other groups or personnel outside the organizational unit, the technician reviews, analyzes, and integrates their work. In addition, assignments at this level require a good understanding of the effect that recommendations made or other results of the assignment may have on an item, system, or process and its end-use application.

The appellants meet with the customer to analyze the project request, i.e., the type of ceremony, and assess the activity needs, the site location, and security factors. They prepare minor work and specific job plans of work to be accomplished by PWC personnel in conjunction with outside contractors; recommend systems and materials and construction methods; and resolve problems pertaining to design, installation, equipment, etc. They prepare estimates of the project costs, including labor and materials. The appellants develop a job plan encompassing a complete description of work, specifications, and milestones; requisition materials; sequence the phases of the project; and plan quality assurance inspections and removal of waste and site cleanup. The project is then given to the shops, and the appellants are responsible for overseeing the project and resolving problems that may arise. They work with the shops, contractors, vendors and the customers to see that the project is appropriately completed.

The appellants' assignments are similar in terms of complexity to the seventh illustrative assignment presented in the classification standard under nature of assignment at the GS-9 level. Although the illustration in the standard describes electrical work, the steps involved are similar to the structural work done by the appellants, including preparing plans, specifications, and cost estimates for the facility alterations and/or new structures required to accommodate the planned ceremonies.

As a result of their experience, the appellants are able to apply sound engineering practices to accomplish the work. The structures for which they are responsible are not highly unique or unusual. The appellants do not routinely have to develop extensive new or extremely complex procedures. Navy instructions, manufacturers' specifications and directives, national and local codes, engineering drawings, sketches and files of similar projects are available in many situations. In those situations necessitating changes in design, precedents are usually available and applicable, and the appellants are able to choose an appropriate means of accomplishing the work from these existing bodies of knowledge.

Although they receive their overall job assignment from the supervisor, the appellants are essentially on their own and do not receive assistance from the supervisor in coming up with the completed assignment or in meeting with customers, vendors, or shop personnel involved in the project. In the event technical assistance is required, they may consult with an engineer. The appellants investigate the job site, consult with the customer, prepare rough drawings, and ultimately provide a workplan, a cost estimate, and requisition material. Once approved by the customer, the work is assigned to the appropriate work center, and the appellants are responsible for providing quality assurance on the project to the workers onsite and meeting with the customer to resolve any job-related problems or concerns. Guidelines generally available to the appellants include PWC and NAVFAC instructions and design manuals, Engineering Handbook, Architectural Graphic Standards, RS Mean cost estimating, technical directives, procedures, engineering drawings, sketches, specifications, manufacturers' literature, and precedents, along with the appropriate building codes and standards. The estimates prepared by the appellants are based on historical data from other jobs when available and their own trades experience. They may use estimations based on Engineer Performance Standards (EPS) and the Estimator system. The EPS is used to assist in estimating jobs by identifying tasks and man-hours, materials, and other cost factors. All projects require the use and application of established engineering principles, methods, and techniques and must conform to any applicable codes. These assignments are comparable to the GS-9 level.

At the GS-11 level, engineering technicians perform work of broad scope and complexity that requires application of (1) demonstrated ability to interpret, select, adapt, and apply many guidelines, precedents, and engineering principles and practices related to the area of specialization; and (2) some knowledge of related scientific and engineering fields. GS-11 technicians plan and accomplish complete projects or studies of a conventional nature requiring independent adaptation of a general fund of background data and information, and interpretation and use of precedents. They are typically confronted with a variety of complex problems in which considerable judgment is needed to make sound engineering compromises and decisions. Other related interests must often be considered, entailing frequent coordination with personnel in the fields concerned. There is a continuing requirement for contact work. Initiative, resourcefulness, and sound judgment are needed in planning and coordinating phases of assignments and in selecting which of several sound alternatives is to be used in arriving at acceptable engineering compromises. Ingenuity and creative thinking are required in devising ways of accomplishing objectives, and in adapting existing equipment or current techniques to new uses.

By comparison, technicians at lower levels receive assignments which are usually segments or phases of the type independently carried out at grade GS-11 or which involve less complex systems and facilities requiring design adaptation. GS-9 technicians apply standard engineering methods and techniques whereas GS-11 technicians are typically required to be creative in devising ways to accomplish the work. Assignments typically found at the GS-11 level include: (1) Develops cost estimates for competitive bidding for a variety of multiple-use construction projects. Determines (a) construction operations and methods involved and the time required to complete each phase or feature, (b) various types and capacities of construction equipment required and cost of operation and maintenance, (c) material types and quantities, and (d) overhead, tax, and other costs; or, (2) Prepares

designs and specifications for various utility systems such as heating, plumbing, air conditioning, ventilating, pumping, gas supply, and pneumatic control systems. Assignments characteristically involve utility systems for office buildings, pumping stations, and flood control facilities, where the complexity or nonconventional nature of the buildings and facilities entails design problems requiring considerable adaptation of precedents or design of features for which precedents are not directly applicable. Performs technical review of contractor-prepared designs and specifications for such systems.

The appellants do not meet the GS-11 level of responsibility. Their assignments deal primarily with conventional construction projects, design features, drawings and contract specifications for stages, platforms, media platforms, and facilities necessary to accommodate various ceremonies. There are established national, local, industrial, and manufacturer codes, specifications, and engineering principles which the appellants use. In addition, there are files of previous work available which they can reference in order to help accomplish their projects. The appellants do not deal with a variety of multiple-use construction projects and do not develop new procedures/systems as is envisioned at this level.

GS-10 level assignments are not specifically described in the standard. The appellants' assignments do not in any way regularly exceed those described at the GS-9 level. Therefore, their assignments cannot properly be classified at the GS-10 level.

GS-9 is assigned for Nature of Assignment.

Level of Responsibility

This factor considers the nature and purpose of person-to-person work relationships, and the supervision received in terms of intensity of review of work and of guidance received during the course of the work cycle.

At the GS-9 level, the supervisor provides information on any related work being performed and furnishes general instruction as to the scope of objectives, time limitations, priorities, and similar aspects. The supervisor is available for consultation and advice where significant deviations from standard engineering practices must be made. The supervisor observes the work for progress and for coordination with work performed by other employees or other sections and for adherence to completion and cost schedules. Standard methods employed are seldom reviewed, but review is made for adequacy and for conformance with established policies, precedents and sound engineering concepts and usage. Personal work contacts typically are more frequent and demanding and are primarily to resolve mutual problems and coordinate the work with that of personnel in related activities. Some contacts are made with using agencies for whom work is done, and with contractors and architecture-engineer firms. The contacts are made to clear up doubtful points, to advise as to discrepancies found in meeting contract terms, to consider recommendations for acceptable substitutes, and to promote adherence to agency standards and concepts of good engineering.

Comparable to the GS-9 level, the appellants operate in an independent manner with very little “in process” supervision. However, technical advice and guidance are readily available. Unusual or controversial problems or policy questions arising in the course of a project may be discussed with the supervisor, but technical supervisory assistance is infrequently sought or required. The appellants have regular contact with other engineering technicians, engineers, requesting officials, and contractors. These contacts are to gather information, to define the scope of the requested work, to clarify policy issues, to provide information on funding sources, to exchange information on security requirements, etc.

At the GS-11 level, technicians have considerable freedom in planning work and carrying out assignments. The supervisor makes assignments in terms of the major objectives, providing background information and advice on specific unusual problems which are anticipated or on matters requiring coordination with other groups. Unusual or controversial problems, or policy questions arising in the course of a project, may be discussed with the supervisor, but technical supervisory assistance is infrequently sought or required. The supervisor is usually informally advised regarding progress but there is little review during progress of typical assignments. Completed work in the form of recommendations, plans, designs, reports, or correspondence is reviewed for general adequacy, conformity to purpose of the assignment, and sound engineering judgment. Contacts in the course of his work are with the same groups of individuals at lower grade levels and the purpose of the contacts is similar. Because of the increased scope of GS-11 assignments, these contacts tend to become more extensive than at lower levels. Contacts with contractors and other personnel regarding complex engineering and administrative problems are carried out without close supervision. However, the technician generally discusses with the supervisor the approach to be taken.

Although the appellants work independently under general supervision, the intent of the GS-11 level is not met. The appellants are seldom faced with unusual problems and policy issues as described at this level, however, if such instances arise, technical advice is available. The GS-11 level of responsibility assumes that the employee is performing assignments equivalent to the GS -11 level and would, therefore, have responsibility for adapting a general font of knowledge and interpreting precedents to handle complex assignments requiring the exercise of considerable judgment. In comparison, the appellants apply conventional engineering practices and a knowledge of the codes, specifications, and regulations to their projects. They exercise some judgment in determining the applicability of the specifications, codes, and engineering principles to the specific project, but do not regularly deal with difficult or complex engineering problems or situations requiring them to consult with the supervisor or engineers. This level of responsibility does not meet the intent of the GS-11 level.

The GS-10 level is not specifically described in the standard. To be appropriately classified at the GS-10 level, the technician’s Level of Responsibility would have to regularly and clearly exceed the level described at grade GS-9. The appellants’ position does not regularly require them to perform at a level that exceeds the GS-9 level.

GS-9 is assigned for Level of Responsibility.

Summary

Both factors are evaluated at the GS-9 level. The engineering technician duties are, therefore, equivalent to the GS-9 level.

Miscellaneous Support Duties

The miscellaneous support duties are evaluated by reference to the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work. The guide describes the general characteristics of each grade level from GS-1 through GS-7 and uses 2 factors for grading purposes: Nature of Assignment (which includes the elements of knowledge required and complexity of the work), and Level of Responsibility (which includes the elements of supervisory controls, guidelines, and contacts).

Nature of Assignment

At the GS-6 level, technical or assistance work requires considerable evaluative judgment within well-defined, commonly occurring aspects of an administrative program or function. The work may involve providing direct assistance to specialists by performing a segment of their work or it may involve responsibility for continuing processes based on direct application of established policies, practices and criteria. This work typically involves identifying issues, problems, or conditions and seeking alternative solutions based on evaluation of the intent of applicable rules, regulations, and procedures. Assignments requiring evaluative judgment are narrowly focused, address a single product or action, and are relatively clear cut. The employee usually deals with problems or situations that remain stable and resemble past problems or situations. Assignments often involve problems or situations where there is not one absolutely correct solution, only a best or most appropriate one. Work requires practical knowledge of guidelines and precedent case actions relating to a particular program area equal to that acquired through considerable work experience or specialized training. The work also requires skill to recognize the dimensions of a problem and express ideas in writing.

At the GS-7 level, work consists of specialized duties with continuing responsibility for projects, questions, or problems that arise within an area of a program or functional specialty as defined by management. Work assignments involve a wide variety of problems or situations common to the segment of the program or function for which the employee is responsible. Each assignment typically consists of a series of related actions or decisions prior to final completion, and decisions are based on the development and evaluation of information from various sources. The work involves identifying and studying factors or conditions and determining their interrelationships to the defined area of work. The employee must be concerned about taking or recommending actions that are consistent with the objectives and requirements of the program or functions. At this level, the work requires knowledge and skill to recognize the dimensions of the problems involved, collect the necessary information, establish the facts, and take or recommend action based on application or interpretation of established guidelines. The work also requires practical knowledge, developed

through increasingly difficult, on-the-job training or experience dealing with the operations, regulations, principles, and peculiarities of the assigned program, function, or activity.

The appellants' work is comparable to the GS-7 level. They are responsible for planning various ceremonies from start to finish, including determining stage or platform design and arrangement, deciding on and ordering flowers, decorations, and food, determining safety requirements, evaluating equipment needs and arranging for equipment, planning for set-up and removal, and providing cost information and determining where costs can be charged based on appropriate regulations. The appellants must recognize special needs and protocol associated with various levels of dignitaries and be knowledgeable of contracting and purchasing regulations. They are the recognized experts in ceremony support based on their years of experience.

Level of Responsibility

At the GS-6 level, the supervisor assists with precedent assignments by providing an interpretation of policy or the concepts and theories of the occupation, and completed work is evaluated for appropriateness and effectiveness in meeting goals. Guidelines such as regulations, instructions, evaluation criteria, and prior case or action files are available, but they are often not completely applicable or have gaps in specificity. The employee uses judgment in interpreting and adapting guidelines for application to specific cases or problems, basing decision on facts and conventional interpretation of guidelines rather than on theory or opinion. Personal contacts are with employees in the agency, in other agencies, or with management or users or providers of agency services. These contacts are made to provide, receive, or develop information in order to identify problems, needs, or issues, or to coordinate work efforts or resolve problems.

At the GS-7 level, the supervisor makes assignments in terms of objectives, priorities, and deadlines, and the employee independently completes assignments in accordance with accepted practices, resolving most conflicts that arise. Completed work is evaluated for appropriateness and conformance to policy. Guidelines at this level are more complex because the employee encounters a wider variety of problems and situations which require choosing alternative responses. Guides, such as regulations, policy statements, and precedent cases, tend to be general and descriptive of intent but do not specifically cover all aspects of the assignments. Guidelines apply less to specific actions and more to the operational characteristics and procedural requirements of the program or function. Employees must use significant judgment and interpretation to apply the guides to specific cases and adapt or improvise procedures to accommodate unusual or one-of-a-kind situations. Personal contacts are usually the same as at GS-6, except that, to a greater degree, the employee serves as a central point of contact to provide authoritative explanations of requirements, regulations, and procedures, and to resolve operational problems or disagreements affecting assigned areas.

The appellants' work is most comparable to the GS-7 level. They are the recognized ceremony coordinators/authorities and are contacted directly by those activities wishing to conduct a ceremony. They provide advice and assistance on the types of activities that are allowable and/or expected for specific types of ceremonies, e.g., change of command, commissionings, and must be knowledgeable

of the regulations and policies governing such events. They provide information on funding and must be fully aware of specialized requirements concerning protocol, security, contracting and purchasing. They must be adaptable and able to resolve operational problems quickly. They are responsible for overseeing all aspects of the ceremony once they are contacted by an activity. Their work is evaluated in general terms after completion to assess overall conformance to policy.

Summary

Both factors equate to the GS-7 level, therefore, the appellants' support work is properly graded at the GS-7 level.

Decision

The engineering technician work is evaluated at GS-9, and the support work is evaluated at GS-7. The engineering technician work represents at least 25 percent of the appellants' work, as well as the paramount requirements of the position, and is, therefore, grade controlling. This position is properly classified as Civil Engineering Technician, GS-802-9.