

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



Chicago Oversight Division  
230 South Dearborn Street, DPN 30-6  
Chicago, Illinois 60604

**Classification Appeal Decision**

**Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code**

**Appellant:** [Appellant's Name]

**Agency Classification:** Agricultural Management Specialist  
GS-475-11

**Organization:** Department of Agriculture  
Farm Service Agency  
[Name] County Office  
[City, State]

**OPM decision:** Loan Specialist Series, **GS-1165**

**OPM decision number:** C-1165-00-01

/s/

Frederick J. Boland  
Classification Appeals Officer

July 31, 2000 Date

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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).

The decision is to be effective no later than the beginning of the sixth pay period after the date of this decision, as permitted by 5 CFR 511.702. The servicing personnel office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description and a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action.

**Decision sent to:**

[appellant's name and address]

[name and address of appellant's servicing  
personnel office]

Ms. Donna Beecher, Director  
Office of Human Resources Management  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
J.L. Whitten Building, Room 316W  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

## **Introduction**

The appellant is assigned to position number KS04OA11, which the agency classified as Agricultural Management Specialist, GS-475-11, on September 29, 1999. The position is located in the [Name] County Office, Farm Service Agency (FSA), Department of Agriculture, [City, State]. The appellant believes that his position description is accurate, but feels he deserves more credit because of the guidelines he applies and the scope and effect of his work.

The appellant voiced a general concern about higher graded positions at other county level offices within the state of [Name]. Agencies must apply classification standards and OPM decisions consistently to ensure equal pay for equal work. OPM will require an agency to conduct a consistency review upon showing that specifically identified positions at different grades have identical duties. Accordingly, our letter transmitting this decision requests that the agency respond to this issue should the appellant specifically identify (title, series, grade, and organizational location) a higher grade position and the duties he believes to be the same.

## **Position Information**

The appellant is one of about four employees in the [Name] County Office, which is one of 23 farm loan offices that are part of the [Name] State Office. The other employees include a GS-9 Agricultural Management Specialist, a GS-7 Program Technician, and a Program Technician hired under the County Office system. The appellant reports to a GS-13 District Director.

The [Name] County Office services the farming communities in six counties ([Name, Name, Name, Name, Name, and Name]) in [location] [Name], providing direct loans to eligible farmers and guaranteed loans made by commercial lenders for farm operating and farm ownership.

Enterprises within the counties include both irrigated and dry land operations. Agricultural products include corn, milo, wheat, soybeans, sunflowers, sorghum, popcorn, white wheat, and white corn. There are also livestock and dairy operations. Most operations are joint operations, about 45 percent, with the others about equally divided between sole proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations.

The appellant supervises credit services for approximately 210 borrowers. As of September 1999, he supervises the following direct loans: about 74 farm ownership loans, 127 operating loans, 76 emergency loans, 17 soil and water loans, and 30 other loans. About 80 percent of the borrowers he supervises have loans in more than one category.

His duties fall into the following functional areas:

- Reviewing and approving applications for agricultural credit assistance. This involves ascertaining the specific needs of the applicant through interviews and onsite observations. Evaluating the applicant's capabilities and the likelihood of the applicant being successful with available assistance.

Determining the type and amount of assistance that will be most beneficial to the applicant.

- Planning operations with approved applicants. This involves developing annual and long-term plans for the operation of the farm. These plans include organizing the farm business, modifying farming practices, applying good financial management and credit practices, and using appropriate record keeping systems.
- Providing continuing guidance and assistance to borrowers. This involves counseling borrowers, analyzing the status of total operations, providing financial and production management assistance, reviewing plans for loan repayment, advising on expenditures, and working out necessary loan modifications.
- Coordinating programs with the business community and informing the rural public of available credit assistance. This involves maintaining contact with organizations that furnish financial and technical assistance on agricultural matters and rural development or that regulate rural community facility operations, informing the public of assistance available through the agency, and providing assistance to planning committees in developing and acting upon coordinated programs for rural renewal and economic development.
- Supervising [Name] County Office staff.

## **Analysis and Findings**

### **Series Determination**

The appellant's duties fall within the type of work covered by the Loan Specialist, GS-1165, series, which includes positions like the appellant's that require knowledge of (1) credit risk factors and lending principles involved in loans granted, insured, or guaranteed by the Federal Government; (2) financial structures and practices of business organizations concerned with such loans; and (3) pertinent statutory, regulatory, and administrative provisions.

Unlike the Agricultural Management Specialist, GS-475, series, the position's duties do not demand a professional knowledge of agriculture and related biological and physical sciences, the appellant's qualifications notwithstanding. Instead, the position's duties may be competently performed when financial and credit risk knowledge is supplemented by a general working knowledge of farm operations, land use and value, production of various types of crops and livestock, and prices and markets in the farming areas where the loans are made and serviced.

### **Grade Determination**

Positions classified to the GS-1165 series are graded by application of *the Loan Specialist Series, GS-1165*, standard dated December 1961. The agency has first level classification authority and the responsibility for determining the position's grade by applying the appropriate criteria, which differ from that originally used. Once the agency has done so, the appellant may pursue his appeal by addressing the GS-1165 criteria if dissatisfied with the agency determination.

### **Decision**

The proper series classification of the appellant's position is GS-1165.