

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

Dallas Oversight Division  
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22  
Dallas, TX 75242-9968

**Classification Appeal Decision**  
**Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code**

**Appellant:** [appellant's name]

**Agency classification:** Budget and Fiscal Officer  
GS-501-11

**Organization:** [appellant's activity]  
Forest Service  
Department of Agriculture  
[geographic location]

**OPM decision:** GS-501-11  
title at agency discretion

**OPM decision number:** C-0501-11-02

/s/ Bonnie J. Brandon

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Bonnie J. Brandon  
Classification Appeals Officer

5/12/00

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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:

### Appellant:

[appellant's name and address]

### Agency:

[servicing personnel office]

USDA-OHRM-PPD  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
J.L. Whitten Building, Room 47W  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW.  
Washington, DC 20250

## **Introduction**

On January 24, 2000, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [the appellant]. His position is classified as Budget and Fiscal Officer, GS-501-11. He works in the Supervisor's Office at [a National Forest], Forest Service, in [geographic location]. [The appellant] initially appealed to the Forest Service, which sustained his current classification. The appellant believes his position should be classified as GS-501-12. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## **General issue**

The appellant believes his position is classified inconsistently with similar positions at other locations. 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). Other methods or factors of evaluation, such as comparison to other positions that may or may not be classified correctly, are not authorized for use in determining the classification of a position. Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant's position to others as a basis for deciding his appeal.

## **Position information**

The appellant is responsible for the budget and fiscal programs of the [specific] National Forest and Grasslands. The Forest comprises the Supervisor's Office, four Districts, and two Grassland Units. Geographically, the Forest and Grasslands cover parts of [three states]. The appellant provides technical and administrative supervision to three GS-9 Budget Analysts, one GS-9 Accountant, one GS-6 Accounting Technician, one GS-5 Voucher Examiner, and one Senior Community Service Employment Program clerical position. He is responsible for developing current and out-year budget projections; executing the budget; managing the accounting program, which includes designing and implementing new systems; evaluating the financial soundness of the Forest's operations and taking or recommending appropriate actions; and advising management on financial matters. The appellant also occasionally assists the Region with fiscal and budget reviews and training.

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

The appellant is assigned currently to the GS-501 Financial Administration and Program Series. This series covers two-grade interval work of a fiscal, financial management, accounting, or budgetary nature that is not classifiable to another more specific series. This series is appropriate for the appellant's position. The title is at the agency's discretion. Since the GS-501 standard does not contain grading criteria, we use another standard covering work that involves similar knowledge and skills to evaluate the grade of the appellant's position. The GS-560 Budget Analysis Series is used for this purpose.

As previously mentioned, the appellant supervises seven positions. He spends approximately 10 percent of his time on supervisory duties. This does not meet the 25 percent threshold for

classifying positions as “supervisory.” An evaluation of his supervisory duties is therefore unnecessary for grading purposes.

### **Grade determination**

The GS-560 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, which uses nine factors. Under the FES, each factor level description explains the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level. The appellant disagrees with the agency’s evaluation of Factors 2, 4, 5, and 6. We reviewed the Forest Service evaluation of Factors 1, 3, 7, 8, and 9, and agree with its determination. This decision, therefore, only contains our evaluation of the factors contested by the appellant.

#### *Factor 2, Supervisory controls*

At level 2-4, the supervisor establishes the overall budgetary objectives and policies of the employing organization, and indicates the sources and types of funding available to achieve the stated objectives. The employee is responsible for independently planning, performing, coordinating, and scheduling the budgetary financing for new programs and activities of a substantive nature, resolving and interpreting ambiguous and conflicting budgetary policies and regulations, and reconciling conflicting budgetary and program objectives. The employee selects the analytical methods used in estimating funding needs and methods to be used in checking the accuracy and reliability of budget forecasts and effectiveness of controls over the use of funds. The employee is responsible for informing the supervisor of budgetary issues with potentially controversial and far-reaching implications. Completed work usually receives a supervisory review for effectiveness in meeting budgetary and program objectives and deadlines, and consistency and agreement of budgetary actions with program objectives.

At level 2-5, the employee is responsible for, and expert in, all phases and methods of budgeting for the substantive nationwide programs administered by the agency or one of its components. The supervisor provides broad administrative and policy direction. The employee is delegated responsibility and authority for independently planning, scheduling, coordinating, carrying out, and evaluating the effectiveness of budgetary operations performed in the agency or assigned component. The employee makes extensive, unreviewed technical judgments. The employee is regarded as the sole technical authority for the employing organization on budgetary matters. The employee’s actions, decisions, and recommendations are reviewed primarily for results obtained in achieving financial goals and objectives, and in providing support for attaining program goals and objectives.

The supervisory controls over the appellant are equivalent to level 2-4. He is supervised by the Administrative Officer, GS-341-13, who, in addition to this role, serves as a Staff Officer for other program areas. The appellant independently manages the Forest’s budget and financial program. He works within a framework of overall objectives and resources outlined by the

agency and the supervisor, and applicable agency and Governmentwide regulations, policies, and practices.

The appellant is responsible for the budgeting and financial aspects of substantive National Forest and Grasslands programs. This includes programs such as wildlife, range, and recreation management; law enforcement; fire management; fee demo projects; improvement projects; [a training academy]; and [a mobilization center]. For the newest program, the Training Academy, the appellant directed the planning and development of the accounting processes. He interprets and deals with policies and regulations of other Federal and State agencies and resolves conflicts between these as they arise. He also advises on and resolves problems involving conflicts between budget and program objectives.

Although the appellant independently handles the budget and fiscal programs, he does keep the supervisor apprised of potential problems and controversial issues. His work is evaluated in terms of the results achieved in meeting financial and resource targets.

The supervisory controls over the appellant's position do not meet level 2-5. The appellant does not have responsibility for the kind of substantive, nationwide programs envisioned at this level. The majority of the programs are local to the Forest and Grasslands. However, he has responsibility for the budget and financial aspects of the [training academy] and the Mobilization Center, which are programs that service other Federal, State, and local agencies. In one sense, the Academy and Center are broader programs than most of the other Forest and Grasslands programs because the services and training provided are available outside of the Forest, Region, and agency realm, to various entities nationwide. While significant, this does not equate to the kind of budgetary and fiscal responsibilities involved with nationwide programs affecting *many* echelons and components of an agency or other agencies. The appellant's level of responsibility does not meet this aspect of the 2-5 level. Also, the appellant is not the sole technical authority on budgetary and financial matters. He discusses the more sensitive and controversial issues with the supervisor and defers to his judgment in making final decisions in those areas.

#### *Factor 4, Complexity*

At level 4-4, an employee performs a wide variety of analytical and technical budget administration functions for substantive programs and support activities that are funded through many separate sources (e.g., appropriations, allotments, reimbursable accounts, and transfers of funds between organizations). Programs and funding are unstable and subject to change throughout the budget year. The budget typically includes either a wide range of object classes and line items for one or a few substantive programs and organizations, or fewer object classes and accounts through which a wide range of program areas are funded. The work requires identification and analysis of changes in budgetary policies, regulations, constraints, objectives, and funds available which affect the accomplishment of program objectives. The employee assists program managers and staff officials in interpreting the impact of, and planning for, multi-year budgetary and program changes. The employee makes use of analytical techniques. The work involves analyzing trends and recommending alternate courses of action to managers concerning the amount, purpose, source, and timing of funding actions.

At level 4-5, the work requires the selection and use of many different and unrelated analytical techniques and methods in the formulation, presentation, and execution of multiyear budget forecasts and requests to cover substantive agency programs. These substantive agency programs have widely varying needs, goals, objectives, work processes, and timetables. The programs characteristically involve levels of services or benefits provided to many echelons and components within a large Federal agency or department, other agencies, private industry, or to the public. Work requires planning and analysis for attainment of multiyear budgetary objectives and plans that conflict with long-range goals and objectives of the organization. There is a great deal of uncertainty and difficulty in determining the amount, sequence, and timing of budgetary actions. This level includes budget execution work involving the most difficult funds control activities associated with multi-year procurement of major weapons systems, construction projects, law enforcement activities, and delivery of payments and benefits to the public. Employees at this level may adapt budgetary policies, analytical methods, and regulatory procedures for use by subordinate echelons, installations, and field offices in formulating or executing budgets.

The complexity of the appellant's position meets level 4-4. He manages the budget and financial programs for [a specific] Forest and two Grassland Units. The programs are funded through many different sources, such as appropriated funds, trust funds, transfer-type funds, permanent funds, and working capital funds. This involves a wide range of separate accounting and budget procedures to track and maintain various funds from cooperative and interagency agreements, capital improvement projects, gifts and bequests, grants, permittee receipts, state and community programs, and other appropriated Forest and Grasslands program funds. The funds and spending levels vacillate so that changes to the budget are required throughout the year. The appellant analyzes the Forest's financial situation, identifies and resolves problems, and manages funds to ensure program targets are met. He provides direction and advice to program managers, staff officers, and line officers on ways to deal with funding issues while still accomplishing the mission.

The complexity of the appellant's position does not meet level 4-5. His work does not involve the analysis and planning for programs with widely varying needs, goals, work processes, and timetables. He does not deal with extremely difficult funds control activities or other complexities associated with programs involving and affecting a significant number of components and levels or subordinate organizational segments. The appellant works with [an Army installation] to develop reimbursable agreements for [a specific Army activity] on Forest property. This is not equivalent to involvement with budgetary work for the procurement of major weapons systems, as described at level 4-5. The appellant does not adapt budget and financial policies and regulatory procedures for use by subordinate offices.

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

At level 5-3, the work involves the application of a wide range of standardized, widely-accepted budgetary regulations, practices, and procedures for assigned organizations, locally-based substantive programs, or support activities. Work products, advice and services rendered, and clearances issued affect the amount and timely availability of money to pay for personnel salaries and expenses, equipment, routine maintenance services, and similar administrative and support

activities in appropriated or industrially funded organizations. Advice affects the accuracy of budget forecasts and compliance with legal and regulatory guides.

At level 5-4, the purpose of work is to formulate and monitor the execution of long-range, detailed budget forecasts and plans to fund the implementation of substantive programs and projects of the employing component or agency. Work involves establishing financial and budgetary goals, timetables, milestones, and other criteria against which the relative costs and benefits of program achievements can be measured and assessing the cost-effectiveness in meeting these goals. Recommendations and technical interpretations affect the amount and availability of funds for conducting major substantive or administrative programs and services (e.g., the development of strategic weapons that are part of larger systems). Programs and projects budgeted for typically cut across component lines within the agency, and may also affect the budgets, programs, and interests of other Federal agencies and public concerns. An example of work at this level is having responsibility for the budget of a Federal agency or one of its components engaged in regulatory or enforcement activities, with subordinate organizational segments that have their own budget staffs.

The scope and effect of the appellant's work meet level 5-3. The work involves managing the financial and budgetary aspects of [a specific] Forest and Grasslands programs. These programs are substantive and locally-based. The appellant's work with other Federal and State agencies is done in connection with the financial issues and needs of these programs. The appellant's work affects the financial soundness of programs and the ability of the Forest and Grasslands to meet targets and objectives.

The scope and effect of the appellant's work do not meet level 5-4. He does not carry out his work for *major substantive* programs, as defined at this level. The agency headquarters in Washington establishes target budget goals. His work does not affect programs covering a wide range of activities or services that cut across many components within the agency or that significantly affect the budgets and programs of other agencies.

#### *Factor 6, Personal contacts*

At level 6-2, contacts are with persons from outside the immediate employing office or organization but within the same Federal agency or component. Contacts typical at this level are with project managers responsible for substantive technical programs and other budget and financial employees at various levels within the agency. This level includes informal telephone and face-to-face contacts with employees of other Federal agencies engaged in budgetary functions and contacts with representatives of private industry firms.

At level 6-3, contacts are with individuals from outside the agency who represent the budget and program interests of other Federal agencies, contractors, private business and financial interests, State and local governments, foreign governments, and Congressional staff members. Contacts normally take place at formal budget briefings, conferences, hearings, or negotiations that are arranged well in advance. At level 6-3, the Primary Standard (the "standard-for-standards" that describes the basic levels of the nine FES factors) explains that contacts with personnel outside of the agency occur in a moderately unstructured setting. At this level, contacts are not

established on a routine basis, the purpose and extent of each contact is different, and the role and authority of each party is identified and developed during the course of the contact.

The appellant's contacts meet level 6-2. He regularly contacts key staff, line officers, supervisors, and employees at the Districts and Supervisor's Office, and budget and fiscal personnel at the Regional Office. He has contacts with budget and fiscal counterparts and other officials at Federal, State, and local agencies, and with contractors and industry personnel.

The contacts do not fully meet level 6-3. The appellant has contacts with officials of other Federal and State agencies. However, these contacts are typically routine and structured. Both parties understand the purpose of the meeting and know the authority and role of each other. For example, the appellant periodically meets with officials from [an Army installation], the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Bureau of Land Management to discuss and update cooperative agreements. This type of meeting with outside officials is not equivalent to that described at level 6-3.

### *Summary*

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

	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Points</b>
1	Knowledge required by the position	1-7	1250
2	Supervisory controls	2-4	450
3	Guidelines	3-4	450
4	Complexity	4-4	225
5	Scope and effect	5-3	150
6	Personal contacts	6-2	25
7	Purpose of contacts	7-3	120
8	Physical demands	8-1	5
9	Work environment	9-1	5
	<b>Total Points</b>		<b>2680</b>

The appellant's position warrants 2680 total points. In accordance with the grade conversion table provided in the standard, the position is properly graded at GS-11.

### **Decision**

The appellant's position is properly covered by the GS-501 Financial Administration and Program Series, graded at GS-11, and titled at the agency's discretion.