

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

Appellant: [name]

Agency classification: Program Analyst
GS-343-13

Organization: [organizational component]
TRICARE Management Activity
Department of Defense
[city & State]

OPM decision: Program Analyst
GS-343-11

OPM decision number: C-0343-11-05

//Judith A. Davis for

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

2/27/2013

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 the 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).

Since this decision lowers the grade of the appealed position, it 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 applicable provisions of parts 351, 432, 536, and 752 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, must be followed in implementing this decision. If the appellant is entitled to grade retention, the two-year retention period begins on the date this decision is implemented. The servicing human resources 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 to the OPM office which accepted the appeal.

Decision sent to:

[claimant]

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Introduction

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Merit System Audit and Compliance accepted this position classification appeal on June 5, 2012. The appellant occupies the position of Program Analyst, GS-343-13, in the [organizational component], TRICARE Management Activity (TMA), Department of Defense, in [city & State]. She requests reclassification of her position to the GS-14 level. We accepted and decided this appeal under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.)

The appellant initially requested review of her position by her servicing human resources office, which sustained its current classification by decision dated July 20, 2011. The appellant subsequently filed a classification appeal with the Department of Defense, Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, which also sustained its current classification by decision dated February 10, 2012.

General Issues

Positions are classified by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines. However, certain duties cannot affect the grade of a position and thus may not be considered in our adjudication of this appeal.

The appellant has performed certain one-time projects that are outside the parameters of her regularly-assigned duties and responsibilities, such as her investigation of a hot-line complaint in early 2012 and her preparation of a briefing on "Balanced Scorecard versus SMaC Recipe." However, duties that are not regular and recurring cannot affect the grade of a position (*Introduction*, section III.F.2). Therefore, these duties are not considered in this decision.

The appellant reported she acts for a higher-graded employee in that person's absence. However, such "acting" duties do not normally affect the grade of a position. First, "acting" in another employee's absence, particularly at the higher grade levels, does not normally convey the full breadth of authority or range of responsibilities associated with the position and upon which its grade is based. Second, only duties that occupy at least 25 percent of an employee's time can affect the grade of a position (*Introduction*, section III.J). Occasional "acting" duties do not meet this threshold. Conversely, performing in an "acting" capacity during another employee's extended absence may warrant a temporary promotion, but temporary performance of higher-graded duties as discussed in the *Introduction*, section III.J, cannot be used to support permanent position upgrading.

Position information

The appellant's primary responsibility is to serve as the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) for the Apptis data contract. This contract provides a data warehouse and information technology (IT) system to support the TRICARE Designated Provider (DP) program. The DP program consists of six designated health care providers (medical facilities in six different geographic locations) serving approximately 100,000 military beneficiaries. These facilities make up the U.S. Family Health Plan (USFHP), a specially legislated TRICARE option within

the military health system offering benefits to active duty family members and all military retirees and their eligible family members without regard to Medicare Part B enrollment. The Government reimburses the six DPs on a capitated basis for their specific populations. In order to accomplish this, a data warehouse of all DP data is required to provide a basis for reimbursement. The data in this warehouse is a combination of DP-provided data on services rendered (which is provided on a monthly basis) and real-time data in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System (DEERS), a database maintained by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) housing accounts for all servicemembers, military retirees, their family members and others eligible for TRICARE benefits. (Active-duty and retired servicemembers are automatically registered in DEERS, but must take action to register family members and report eligibility changes.) The contract provides connectivity to the DPs, DEERS, and TMA as well as critical weekly and monthly reports on enrollment and capitation and quarterly reconciliation reports to assist the Government's reimbursement actions. It provides a user-friendly Web portal for administrative staff at each DP and the TMA that allows them to upload monthly files, access monthly reports, access real-time DEERS data, and conditionally enroll newborns in the data warehouse, and creates the secure connections necessary to connect data from DEERS, TMA, and the DPs. The Apptis contract provides overall program management and quality assurance for maintaining the data warehouse and creating the required reports through two subcontractors. The cost of this contract is approximately \$3-4 million per year.

In her capacity as COR for the Apptis contract, the appellant is responsible for monitoring contractor performance by ensuring that all deliverables (consisting primarily of reports posted on the portal) are met within specified suspense dates; resolving error reports involving DP data entry errors; ensuring that system problems or failures reported by users are resolved expeditiously by the contractor; tracking contractor costs on a spreadsheet to stay apprised of how much money is remaining on the contract; and reviewing and approving monthly invoices for accuracy and reasonableness of expenditures. She has weekly status meetings with contractor staff, who provide her with a consolidated weekly activity report on the status of action items and any outstanding issues, and meets with senior contractor and subcontractor representatives on a quarterly basis to review their performance and discuss needed improvements. She prepares contract modifications to incorporate mandated system changes, such as technical changes to the interface or changes in the reports being generated, and works with the contractor in implementing these changes, including reviewing various testing scenarios to ensure the changes work properly and approving implementation plans. As an adjunct to her role as Apptis COR, the appellant approves requests for access to the portal received from staff at the DPs or TMA based on their having been security-cleared and the level of access required. The appellant reported this work comprises up to 70 percent of her time. She reported the remainder of her time is spent on various miscellaneous projects such as preparing briefings, responding to Congressional inquiries regarding beneficiary complaints, and facilitating annual Inspector General audits with the DPs.

Although both the appellant and her second-level supervisor certified the accuracy of her position description (PD) (#00554), this PD does not accurately depict her duties and responsibilities. First, although the appellant's primary responsibility is to serve as COR for the Apptis contract, this function is not specifically described in the PD. It appears to be subsumed in the first paragraph of the PD which states her responsibility, at 50 percent of her time, for

serving as "Senior Program Analyst, Contracting Officer Representative and Billing Official" but only specifically describes the "billing official" function, which is characterized as involving "managing the billing, payment and approval processes of all [division] Government Purchase Card for payment." However, the appellant has not yet begun performing this work, although the PD was established in July 2011.¹ The remainder of the first paragraph also includes such duties as "monitors and analyzes the program budget to ensure program goals and objectives are met," "develops staffing requirements for related program functions and missions," and "develops performance metrics, workload factors and quality levels of effort to accomplish and monitor projects and studies," which appear to be generic program analysis duties but which are not a regular and continuing part of the appellant's position. For example, although the appellant described one "project" where she made recommendations (not presented in written form) for cost containment under the Apptis contract by reducing contractor travel, their use of subject-matter experts, and other miscellaneous costs, and recommended hosting the data in a "cloud" environment, this is neither an ongoing function of her position nor does she perform such duties in relation to the broader TRICARE or DP programs.

The second paragraph of the PD also describes her responsibility, at 30 percent of her time, for serving "as an advisor and consultant for complex matters and issues pertaining to the development, acquisition, implementation, and policy oversight/management of health care delivery systems within assigned areas of responsibility," including such duties as preparing "operational decisions and recommendations regarding methodology, development, implementation, management and oversight of related health care programs." This would appear to suggest the appellant is responsible for program development involving the line health care delivery services of the organization, which is a clear misrepresentation of her role as COR for an IT contract.

The third paragraph of her PD inexplicably describes her "primary responsibility," although at only 20 percent of her time, as serving as the "Site Security Manager supporting the [Defense] Information Assurance (IA) Certification and Accreditation Process (DIACAP) that provides testing and verification to ensure adequate security controls are in place for IT systems for the Apptis contract." However, DIACAP has been replaced by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Risk Management Framework methodology for certifying and accrediting the security of an agency's IT systems, and the technical aspects of implementing this methodology are carried out by an IT staff member designated as the "NIST coordinator." The appellant's responsibility in relation to this function is limited to granting access to the Apptis portal as requested for staff at the DPs or TMA based on whether they have a security clearance and ensuring the Apptis contractor's submission of an annual report certifying their conformance to NIST IT security requirements, the technical aspects of which are reviewed by

¹ Because this work has not yet been performed, it is not addressed in this decision. However, the supervisor described the intended duties as making all credit card purchases (for office supplies and equipment) for the division, reconciling the monthly statements, and tracking the money spent and available. This is one-grade interval work covered by the GS-1105 Purchasing Series, which provides grade-level criteria only to the GS-10 level, with the higher grades reserved for work involving the purchase of specialized services (such as research studies), specialized construction, or specially manufactured equipment..

the "NIST coordinator." This work is an adjunct to her Apptis COR role, occupies a relatively minor portion of her time, and does not constitute her primary responsibility.

Further, the factor levels as presented in the appellant's PD materially misrepresent both the nature of the work she performs and the level of authority she is delegated. The factor levels consist of language transcribed directly from the higher factor levels in the OPM classification guide the agency used to grade her position, even though that language refers to duties she does not actually perform. The appellant then cites this language in her appeal as support for crediting the higher factor levels and thus a higher grade.

An employee's PD is expected to meet certain minimum standards of adequacy and accuracy in depicting the duties being performed in that it serves as the basis for determining the employee's pay and other associated benefits based on that pay. The appellant's PD does not meet these minimum standards of adequacy and accuracy and should be revised to describe the actual work she is performing and to more realistically depict the factor-level characteristics associated with her work. The factor-level descriptions contained in OPM classification standards and guides represent the general characteristics of work at the various levels for the occupation in question. They are to be used for comparison purposes to classify a position by selecting the level that most closely corresponds to the PD's factor descriptions. They are not intended to be directly transcribed in the PD to support a desired grade level irrespective of any correspondence to the actual work being performed.

In adjudicating a classification appeal, we determine the proper classification of the appellant's *position*; i.e., the duties assigned by management and performed by the appellant, not the appellant's *position description*. Although it is expected that the duties assigned and performed will be accurately depicted in the appellant's PD, we do not classify the position by relying on language in the PD which is not representative of the actual work performed. Therefore, this decision is based on our assessment of the appellant's duties and responsibilities as determined through our factfinding, including the on-site desk audit and subsequent follow-up telephone audit with the appellant, telephone interview with her first-level supervisor, review of work samples furnished by the appellant, and other material received in the agency administrative report on July 10, 2012.

Series and title determination

The appellant does not contest the series or title of her position, and it is correctly assigned to the GS-343 Management and Program Analysis Series. This series covers staff administrative analytical and evaluative work related to the effectiveness and efficiency with which agencies carry out their assigned programs and functions. Insofar as the appellant's work focuses on overseeing the effectiveness of contractor information systems in reporting on the delivery of services under the TRICARE DP program, her position is properly titled as Program Analyst, which applies to positions involved in analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of line or operating programs.

Grade determination

Positions in the GS-343 series are evaluated by reference to the Administrative Analysis Grade Evaluation Guide (AAGEG). This guide is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, under which factor levels and accompanying point values are to be assigned for each of the following nine factors, with the total then being converted to a grade level by use of the grade conversion table provided in the standard. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor-level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor-level description, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect that meets a higher level.

The appellant contests the agency's evaluation of Factors 2, 4, and 6. She does not contest the agency's evaluation of Factors 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 9. After careful review of the record, we concur with the agency's factor level assignments for Factors 2, 8, and 9, but we disagree with their factor level assignments for F-factors 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7. We discuss Factors 1-7 below.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information an employee must understand in order to do the work, and the skills needed to apply that knowledge.

The agency assigned Level 1-8 under this factor, but noted that although "the position description states that the position operates at Level 1-8, [it] does not describe duties that support that level of responsibility" and that "[a]ssignment to Level 1-8 would require comparable responsibilities spelled out in the position description in language other than that used in the published classification standard."

The knowledge requirements listed in the appellant's PD consist of a combination of knowledges that are either not required by or relevant to her actual duties (e.g., "comprehensive knowledge of the range of administrative laws, policies, regulations and precedents applicable to the administration of TRICARE and the Military Health System," "skill in applying fact-finding and investigative techniques to gather clear-cut factual evidence of administrative waste and abuse"), or that are directly transcribed from Level 1-8 in the AAGEG without regard to their correspondence to actual duties performed (e.g., knowledge and skills associated with conducting analytical studies of agency benefit programs, preparing recommendations for legislation, directing teams or staff studies, and negotiating with management officials where the proposals involve substantial agency resources.)

At Level 1-7, work requires knowledge and skill in analyzing and evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of program operations carried out by administrative or professional personnel, or substantive administrative support functions such as supply, budget, procurement, or human resources which facilitate line or program operations. This level includes knowledge of pertinent laws, regulations, policies, and precedents which affect the use of program and related support resources (people, money, and equipment). Projects and studies typically require knowledge of

the major issues, program goals and objectives, work processes, and administrative operations of the organization. This knowledge is used to conduct studies to evaluate and recommend ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of work operations in a program or support setting. It is also applied in developing new or modified work methods, records and files, management processes, staffing patterns, and procedures for automating work processes for the conduct of administrative support functions or program operations.

Level 1-8 is the level of the expert analyst who has mastered the application of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods for the assessment and improvement of program effectiveness or the improvement of complex management processes and systems. This level requires comprehensive knowledge of the range of administrative laws, policies, regulations, and precedents applicable to the administration of one or more important public programs. This knowledge is applied in carrying out such assignments as designing and conducting comprehensive management studies where the boundaries are extremely broad and difficult to determine in advance; preparing recommendations for legislation to change the way programs are carried out; or evaluating new legislation for potential program impact and to translate it into program actions and services. The proposals made involve substantial agency resources or require extensive changes in established procedures.

The distinction between Levels 1-7 and 1-8 as it relates to the appellant's position lies in the breadth of the knowledge required. Level 1-7 requires knowledge of the program operations of the organization or knowledge of substantive administrative support functions which facilitate the line or program operations of the organization. This knowledge is applied in the context of such assignments as developing new or modified work methods, records and files, management processes, or procedures for automating work processes. These assignments affect the administration of program services to the extent of making them more efficient or effective, but do not change the fundamental nature of the programs as is expected at Level 1-8. This is a very clear parallel to the appellant's position, which requires knowledge of the IT requirements of the DP program as supported by the Apptis contract, to perform such assignments as ensuring quality control over services and deliverables and overseeing the contractor's implementation of new system interfaces or reporting elements. Thus, the appellant's work in administering the Apptis contract requires knowledge of the DP program only to the extent needed to determine the data to be captured and processed by the IT system, as is typical of Level 1-7.

In contrast, Level 1-8 requires a much broader knowledge of the "range of administrative laws, policies, regulations, and precedents applicable to the administration of one or more important public programs." This knowledge is applied in the context of such assignments as making legislative recommendations that change the way programs are carried out or provide for substantially altered operational programs. The appellant's duties do not require this degree of program-related knowledge. Her assignments require her to understand the data input and reporting processes of the DP program, but not the range of laws, policies, and regulations governing its overall administration to perform such duties as making legislative recommendations or conducting studies that substantially alter the manner in which health services are provided or reimbursed under the program. Rather, the work performed under the Apptis contract enables other program staff to administer the DP program through the provision of data support. Further, the appellant is not responsible for the narrower function of

determining changes in reporting requirements or system interfaces for the DP program. These changes originate from DMDC or the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA), and the appellant's responsibility is limited to preparing the contract modifications to incorporate the new requirements and overseeing their implementation.

Level 1-7 is credited (1250 points).

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

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

The agency assigned Level 2-4 under this factor. The appellant believes Level 2-5 should be credited, citing language in her PD transcribed directly from that level in the AAGEG.

At Level 2-4, within a framework of priorities, funding, and overall objectives, the employee and supervisor develop overall work plans covering requirements, scope, and deadlines. Within these overall parameters, the employee is responsible for planning and organizing the work, estimating costs, coordinating with staff and management, and conducting all phases of the work. The employee keeps the supervisor informed of potential controversies or problems with widespread impact. Completed work is reviewed for compatibility with organizational goals and effectiveness in achieving objectives.

The appellant's level of responsibility and the supervisory controls exercised over her work are consistent with Level 2-4. This level describes work carried out with a high degree of independence and recognized competence and as such fully represents the manner in which the appellant operates.

At Level 2-5, the employee is a recognized authority in the analysis and evaluation of programs and issues, subject only to administrative and policy direction concerning overall priorities and objectives. The employee is typically delegated complete responsibility and authority to plan, schedule, and carry out major projects concerned with the analysis and evaluation of programs or organizational effectiveness, and exercises discretion in determining whether to broaden or narrow studies. The employee's analyses and recommendations are normally reviewed only for potential influence on broad agency policy objectives and program goals, and findings and recommendations are normally accepted without significant change.

Level 2-5 is not met. This level recognizes not only independence of action, but also the degree of responsibility and authority inherent in the work as the context for the independence exercised. Level 2-5 is predicated on responsibility for independently planning and carrying out major program activities or projects, with only broad administrative and policy direction. Because the parameters of the work are not clearly defined, the employee at this level has the authority to determine the most productive areas of endeavor. In contrast, the appellant carries out an ongoing set of activities, the content and boundaries of which are well-established. Her work does not involve planning and carrying out projects of the magnitude expected at this level; i.e., she oversees the effectiveness of work performed under an IT contract rather than the

effectiveness of broad organizations or programs (meaning the line operating programs or major administrative functions of the agency).

In order to understand the intent of Level 2-5, it is instructive to note that the term "program" has a very specific meaning for classification purposes. Typically, programs constitute the broad objectives which an agency is authorized and funded by statute to administer, such as development of a major weapons system, public health and safety, revenue collection, regulation of trade, and the delivery of benefits or services. In addition, comparable agencywide line or staff programs essential to the operation of an agency are considered programs (e.g., agencywide personnel or budget programs). Programs are normally of such magnitude they must be carried out through a combination of line and staff functions. (See OPM's General Schedule Supervisory Guide.) Thus, the Apptis contract is not a program, it is a contract that provides IT support to a program (i.e., the DP program).

Although the appellant asserts she has "full responsibility and authority of all aspects of providing Information Technology support to the Designated Provider healthcare system," our factfinding determined her work is subject to technical review and control by the branch chief, who has ultimate authority over all aspects of the work under her supervision. The appellant's responsibility is limited to the conduct of established processes and functions, but she does not have the authority to, for example, make contract modifications for the performance of additional work by the contractor on her own initiative. Her work does not lend itself to the broad administrative and policy direction expected at this level, and the nature of her work is not such that it would permit the exercise of this level of responsibility and authority, which is properly credited to the head of a program or function (in this case, the branch chief). For example, employees at this level would be responsible for overseeing the conduct of a broad function or program including reviewing the work products generated for technical sufficiency. Employees at this level do not receive supervision in terms of the content of the products or the conduct of normal operational activities. Rather, supervision is limited to the type of administrative and policy direction that would be exercised over an employee whose responsibility encompasses managing a program or making major program recommendations. The appellant does not manage a program or make major program recommendations and thus does not have the degree of responsibility and authority upon which Level 2-5 is predicated.

Level 2-4 is credited (450 points).

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of the guidelines used and the judgment needed to apply them.

The agency assigned Level 3-5 under this factor, citing language in the PD transcribed directly from the AAGEG at that level.

At Level 3-3, guidelines consist of standard reference material, including instructions and manuals covering the subjects involved (e.g., procedures, policies, and regulations). Included at this level are work assignments in which the subject studied is covered by a wide variety of administrative regulations and procedural guidelines, where the employee must use judgment in

researching regulations and in determining the relationship between the guidelines and organizational efficiency or program effectiveness.

The appellant's use of guidelines is consistent with Level 3-3. The appellant is responsible for ensuring contractor IT products and activities are carried out in conformance with the requirements of the contract. This is comparable to work assignments where "the subject studied is covered by a wide variety of administrative regulations and procedural guidelines," where the appellant must determine, for example, the most effective way for IT reporting changes to be implemented by the contractor.

At Level 3-4, guidelines consist of general administrative policies which require considerable adaptation and/or interpretation, the program goals and objectives of the organization, and various administrative controls or targets relating to productivity and resource usage. At this level, policies and precedents provide a basic outline of the results desired, but do not go into detail as to the methods that should be used. Within the context of broad regulatory guidelines, the employee may refine or develop more specific guidelines such as implementing regulations for the administration of operating programs.

Level 3-4 is not met. The nature of the work carried out by the appellant in relation to the Apttis contract does not support this level of guideline interpretation. Changes in work requirements under the contract relate to changes in data reporting. However, the appellant is not responsible for interpreting "general administrative policies" providing only a "basic outline of the results desired" and translating these into technical specifications for implementation by the contractor. As an example, the appellant provided the relevant documents leading up to a contract modification to implement a set of enrollment fees/premium system changes. As the appellant described the process, a telecon was hosted by DMDC staff with all participants who interface with DEERS to brief them on the upcoming system changes, the expected end products, and timelines for testing and implementation. The appellant subsequently received from DMDC the "Technical Specification for the Premium Interface" which was then reflected in a "Publications System Change Transmittal for the TRICARE Operations Manual." The appellant prepared the contract modification to implement the system changes directly referencing the DMDC technical specifications for implementation. (For example, specific contract changes consisted of such instructions as "the contractor shall implement the revised PNT layout in Attachment 1 [DMDC Premium Medical Policy Notification (PNT) External Technical Specifications]" and "see Attachment 5 [DMDC Fee Interface Technical Specification] for technical specifications that are to be followed for any fee payment for FY12 and prior.") It is difficult to reconcile this process with Level 3-4 criteria that the guidelines being interpreted "do not go into detail as to the methods that should be used." Assignment of Level 3-4 would in effect be crediting the appellant's position for work performed by staff at DMDC.

At Level 3-5, guidelines consist of basic administrative policy statements or initiatives, laws, or court decisions. The employee interprets and revises existing policy and regulatory guidance for use by others within or outside the employing organization. Some employees review proposed legislation or regulations which would significantly change the agency's programs. Other employees develop study formats for use by others on a project team or at subordinate levels.

Since Level 3-4 is not met, Level 3-5 requiring an even higher level of guideline interpretation may not be assigned. However, we note that notwithstanding the language in the appellant's PD under this factor, the appellant does not interpret legislative history, related court decisions, or State and local laws, does not revise existing policy and regulations for staff within and outside TMA, does not make recommendations on proposed legislation or regulations significantly changing the way TMA does business, nor is she recognized as an expert in the development and interpretation of guidance on program planning and evaluation.

Level 3-3 is credited (275 points).

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks or processes in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

The agency assigned Level 4-5 under this factor. The appellant believes Level 4-6 should be credited, citing language in the PD transcribed directly from the AAGEG at that level.

At Level 4-4, work involves gathering information, identifying and analyzing issues, and developing recommendations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of work operations in a program or program support setting. Characteristic of this level is originality in refining existing work methods and techniques for application to the analysis of specific issues or resolution of problems. An illustration of Level 4-4 provided in the AAGEG is as follows:

Studies, analyzes, and develops methods to improve the accuracy, adequacy, and timeliness of information and systems for disseminating information about the agency's programs and work force to managers at many organizational echelons and/or geographic locations. Employee must consider information needs, interests, and level of detail needed to satisfy a wide variety of user requirements. Potential sources of data must be cross-checked, analyzed, and interpreted by the employee to obtain accurate, relevant information.

The complexity of the appellant's work is consistent with Level 4-4. The appellant translates system change transmittals and new technical specifications (i.e., "identifying and analyzing issues") into contract modifications for implementation in a program support setting. Her work is focused on the resolution of specific issues and problems, such as whether the contractor's implementation plans for a mandated system change are responsive to the requirements stated in the technical specifications or whether reports generated under the Apptis contract contain accurate information. The Level 4-4 illustration above broadly expresses the complexity inherent in the appellant's position; i.e., ensuring that the data support provided by the Apptis contract is supplying accurate information within the formats prescribed for approximately 30 different reports used by management to administer the DP program.

At Level 4-5, work consists of projects and studies requiring analysis of interrelated issues of effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity of mission-oriented programs. Typical assignments

require developing detailed plans, goals, and objectives for the long-range implementation and administration of the program, where the work deals less with concrete administrative processes than with subjective issues requiring value judgments regarding the relative advantages and disadvantages of various ways of improving the effectiveness of program administration. An illustration of Level 4-5 provided in the AAGEG is as follows:

Analyzes and formulates agency requirements for resource management information systems to support resource allocation targets for a nationwide medical care program including inpatient care, long-term care, and outpatient care, and an extensive medical education program. The work involves developing the overall systems concepts for the resources management systems data base, providing input on state-of-the-art systems design, defining new information requirements, and developing procedures and formats for timely and accurate reporting. Leads evaluations of the output of information systems components (e.g., outpatient care) to insure that resource allocation objectives are being met and to assess effectiveness from a systems standpoint.

This level is not met. The focus of the appellant's work is not on subjective considerations aimed at improving overall program administration but rather on the concrete data reporting requirements of the Apptis contract. Comparison of the two related illustrations at Levels 4-4 and 4-5 clarifies the distinction between these two levels. As at Level 4-4, the appellant is responsible for maintaining and improving "the accuracy, adequacy, and timeliness of information and systems for disseminating information" provided by the Apptis contract by monitoring contractor performance and by ensuring that system changes/technical specifications developed by DMDC are translated into contract modifications and fully implemented by the contractor. She is not, however, responsible for developing the overall systems concepts, defining new information requirements, or developing new procedures and formats for reporting, as these functions are performed by DMDC. She reviews the data outputs to ensure that the contractor is capturing the information required and presenting it in the prescribed formats, but she does not lead evaluations of this output for the purpose of evaluating any aspects of DP program performance or to assess whether it represents the most effective use or presentation of the data.

At Level 4-6, the employee plans, organizes, and carries through to completion analytical studies involving the substance of key agency programs. Studies are of such breadth and intensity that they often involve input and assistance from other analysts and subject-matter specialists. Where the assistance of other analysts is required, the employee typically serves as the team leader responsible for assigning segments of the study to various participants, coordinating the efforts of the group and consolidating the efforts of the group. At this level, there is extreme difficulty in identifying the nature of the issues or problems to be studied and in planning and determining the scope and depth of the study. The work typically involves efforts to develop and implement broad programs based upon new or revised legislation mandating such broad program goals as reducing pollution, improving safety, or providing health care.

Since Level 4-5 is not met, Level 4-6 requiring an even higher level of complexity may not be assigned. However, we note that notwithstanding the language in the appellant's PD under this factor, her work does not approach this level of complexity. She is not involved in the analysis

of "key agency programs" in the capacity of team leader, does not develop detailed plans and objectives for the long-range implementation of the DP program, does not develop or implement programs based upon new or revised legislation, and her work is not otherwise characterized by the language contained at Level 4-6. For example, her work does not involve "discerning the intent of legislation and policy statements, and determining how to translate the intent into program actions." Rather, it involves ensuring that technical specifications developed by other agency components are implemented by the Apptis contractor.

Level 4-4 is credited (225 points).

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

The agency assigned Level 5-5 under this factor, citing language in the PD transcribed directly from the AAGEG at that level.

At Level 5-4, the purpose of the work is to assess the efficiency and productivity of program operations or to analyze and resolve problems in the staffing, effectiveness, and efficiency of administrative support and staff activities. At this level, work contributes to improvement of program operations and/or administrative support activities at different echelons and/or geographic locations in the organization, or may affect the nature of administrative work done in components of other agencies.

At Level 5-5, the purpose of the work is to analyze and evaluate major administrative aspects of substantive, mission-oriented programs, such as evaluating the effectiveness of programs conducted throughout a bureau or service of an independent agency, a regional structure of equivalent scope, or a large, complex multi-mission field activity. The study reports prepared contain findings and recommendations of major significance to top management of the agency and often serve as the basis for new administrative systems, legislation, regulations, or programs.

Thus, Level 5-4 relates to determining or improving the efficiency of program or administrative activities at multiple echelons or geographic locations within an agency (i.e., discrete operating segments of the program), whereas Level 5-5 relates to the basic design, structure, or regulatory framework of the overall program. Consistent with Level 5-4, the scope of the appellant's work encompasses the IT activities supporting the DP program, which provides data warehousing and reports to users throughout the system. Although the Apptis contract may be considered a "major administrative aspect" of the DP program, the scope and effect of the appellant's work in relation to this contract is to ensure its implementation, not to devise new system changes as would be expected at level 5-5.

Level 5-4 is credited (225 points).

Factor 6, Personal contacts
and
Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

These factors include face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain and the purposes of these contacts. The relationship between Factors 6 and 7 presumes that the same contacts will be evaluated under both factors.

The agency assigned Level 3 under *Personal contacts*, noting that "the organizational location of the position does not support the level and purpose of contacts described in the position description." The appellant believes Level 4 should be credited, citing language in the PD transcribed directly from the AAGEG at that level.

Under *Personal contacts*, the appellant's contacts match Level 3, where contacts include program officials within the agency but several managerial levels removed from the employee, and persons outside the agency, such as contractors, in a moderately unstructured setting.

Level 4 is not met, where contacts are with high-ranking officials, such as the heads of other agencies, top Congressional staff, mayors of large cities, or executives of comparable private sector organizations. Notwithstanding the language in the appellant's PD under this factor, she has no contacts of this nature. Preparing responses to written Congressional inquiries is not equivalent to "face-to-face and telephone contacts" with "top Congressional staff."

The agency assigned Level c under *Purpose of contacts*.

Under *Purpose of contacts*, Level b is met, where contacts are to provide advice on such matters as the identification of decision-making alternatives, appraisals of success in meeting goals, or recommendations for resolving administrative problems. This accurately characterizes the nature of the appellant's contacts in evaluating the contractor's performance and resolving operating problems.

Level c is not met, where contacts are to influence managers to accept recommendations on organizational or program improvement where resistance may be encountered due to such issues as organizational conflict or resource problems. The focus of the appellant's work is not to recommend system changes but rather to ensure implementation of the changes developed by others. Notwithstanding the language in the appellant's PD under this factor, she does not make "recommendations affecting major programs, dealing with substantial expenditures, or significantly changing the nature and scope of organizations."

Level 3b is credited (110 points).

Summary

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Points</u>
Knowledge required by the position	1-7	1250
Supervisory controls	2-4	450
Guidelines	3-4	275
Complexity	4-4	225
Scope and effect	5-4	225
Personal contacts/Purpose of contacts	3b	110
Physical demands	8-1	5
Work environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total		2545

The total of 2545 points falls within the GS-11 range (2355-2750) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard.

Decision

The appealed position is properly classified as Program Analyst, GS-343-11.