



United States Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness

Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions

June 2000

Article No. 24-06

Standard: Purchasing, GS-1105 (March 1993)

Factor: Factor 2, Supervisory controls

Issue: Distinguishing Level 2-3 from 2-4

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in OPM's adjudication of a classification appeal. The appellant was a Purchasing Agent responsible for administering contracts and purchasing activities related to obtaining services, supplies, and minor construction and repair work from commercial and government required sources. She was authorized to procure goods and services using Simplified Acquisition Procedures for open market purchases. Other items and services were acquired through Federal Supply Schedule contracts, fixed-price, or negotiated contracts between the government and commercial concerns. The agency credited Level 2-4 claiming the appellant worked very independently, was responsible for resolving disagreements between contractors and purchasers, and had the authority to terminate the contracts she oversaw.

Resolution

Level 2-4 is credited when the employee purchases various goods and services with different requirements, coordinates the work with others, and regularly resolves conflicts in administering purchase orders, such as protests, claims, and terminations for convenience or default. Typically, there is no higher level procurement expertise immediately available. Generally, it is not feasible to obtain higher level guidance since many of the problems require immediate attention and intensive on-the-spot negotiation.

OPM determined that, although the appellant functioned with very little supervision, her regular and recurring work assignments involved small purchases of standard, commercial goods and

services. These assignments did not typically require the conflict resolution, coordination, or intensive negotiations needed to credit Level 2-4. When contractors and clients disagreed over goods or services, the appellant clarified procedural issues and matters by interpreting the conditions or requirements in effect at the time the contract was signed. While she had authority to terminate a contract if the contractor did not meet the terms of the contract, termination was seldom necessary with the small purchase contracts she managed. Higher level procurement expertise also was immediately available. At the appellant's installation, negotiations and terminations of the type described at Level 2-4 involved large, formal contracts that were handled by higher graded procurement personnel. OPM determined that Level 2-4 was not fully met and credited Level 2-3.

“Back to the Basics”

This decision illustrates that it is not just the degree of independence that affects the evaluation of supervisory controls. It is also the degree to which the nature of the work allows the employee to make decisions and commitments and to exercise judgment. Having expertise and authority are not enough to credit Level 2-4 if the typical work does not present the full range of conditions requiring the level of judgment and initiative described. The availability of higher level procurement expertise, and the authority and responsibility assigned to those positions, precluded evaluating the appellant's position above Level 2-3.

Link to [C-1105-07-02](#)