

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

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

**Agency classification:** Fiscal Technician  
GS-503-7

**Organization:** Financial Management Staff  
Administrative Services  
State Conservationist Office  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
[city and state]

**OPM decision:** GS-503-7  
Title to be determined by agency  
(to include Technician)

**OPM decision number:** C-0503-07-02

Judith A. Davis for

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

6/18/2010

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Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), this decision constitutes a certificate which 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 (Introduction)*, appendix 4, Section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

**Decision sent to:**

[appellant's name and address]

[servicing HR office name and address]

Classification Appeals Examiner  
Human Resources Policy Division  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
USDA/DA/OHCM  
J.L. Whitten Building, Room 312-W  
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## **Introduction**

The Dallas Oversight and Accountability Group (now Dallas Oversight) of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal on January 15, 2010, from [name]. The appellant's position is currently classified as Fiscal Technician, GS-503-7, but she believes it should be classified at either the GS-8 or GS-9 grade level. The position is located in the Financial Management Staff, Administrative Services, State Conservationist Office, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in [city and state]. We received the complete agency's administrative report on February 3, 2010. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## **Background and general issues**

On November 12, 2008, the appellant requested a desk audit of her position from the servicing human resources office (HRO) based on performing additional duties and responsibilities. Their November 3, 2009, evaluation statement left the classification unchanged. The appellant was later assigned to a new official position description (PD), number [number], classified on January 14, 2010, to reflect her additional responsibilities as the State Office's (SO) Vendor Coordinator and Relocation Coordinator. She subsequently forwarded this appeal to OPM.

The appellant raises various concerns about her agency's desk audit findings and procedures. In adjudicating this appeal, our responsibility is to make an independent decision on the proper classification of the appellant's position. Because our decision sets aside all previous agency decisions, any concerns regarding the agency's classification review process are not germane to this decision.

The appellant also believes she is performing work similar to NRCS positions classified at higher grades located in other SOs. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM position classification standards (PCS) and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Other methods or factors of evaluation are not authorized for use in determining the classification of a position, such as comparison to positions which may or may not have been properly classified.

Like OPM, NRCS must classify positions based on comparison to OPM's PCSs and guidelines. In accordance with 5 CFR 511.612, agencies are required to review their own classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with OPM certificates. Consequently, NRCS has primary responsibility for ensuring its positions are classified consistently with OPM appeal decisions. If the appellant believes her position is classified inconsistently with another, then she may pursue this matter by writing to her agency's headquarters HRO. She should specify the precise organizational location, series, title, grade, and responsibilities of the positions in question. The agency should explain to her the differences between her position and the others, or classify those positions in accordance with this appeal decision.

**Position information**

NRCS's mission is accomplished through the combined efforts of its headquarters, SOs, local conservation districts, and field offices. The appellant's position is assigned to the SO, whose mission is to provide technical and financial assistance to help land managers and communities care for their land, as well as take a comprehensive approach to using and protecting the soil, water, and related resources in the rural, suburban, urban, and developing areas of [state]. Besides the appellant, the Financial Management Staff currently includes another GS-503-7 Fiscal Technician and a GS-560-11 Budget Analyst position. The appellant's first-level supervisor is the Budget Officer (GS-560-12, position), and the second-level supervisor is the Administrative Officer (GS-341-13, position).

The appellant is responsible for maintaining accounts and budget information, examining vouchers and invoices, and scheduling and processing payments. She maintains funds for the SO's programs by using the National Finance Center's (NFC) Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS) to record commitments and obligations while ensuring transactions are properly coded, classified, and include appropriate documentation. The appellant reviews the Detailed Daily Transaction Report (DDTR) weekly to ensure payments are correctly disbursed through FFIS.

As Vendor Coordinator, the appellant provides assistance and training to State, area, and field office personnel. This work includes identifying and resolving problems with discrepancies in vendor information (e.g., when tax identification and social security numbers do not match the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) database). The appellant monitors and reviews the vendor information in various financial systems including USDA's Service Center Information Management System (SCIMS), Program Contracts System (ProTracts), Fund Manager (FM), FFIS, and the IRS database. She detects, resolves, and clears errors involving vendor information to facilitate the timely processing of payments. The appellant compiles and distributes reports notifying appropriate program staff concerning vendor information errors. Since August 2009, the appellant has functioned as the National Vendor Liaison, a responsibility assigned to an NRCS headquarters position prior to it becoming vacant. According to the first-level supervisor, the liaison responsibilities, though initially assigned as an interim duty, may or may not become a permanent part of the appellant's position. Liaison work entails serving as the point-of-contact for all State conservationist offices in identifying and correcting vendor information errors.

As Relocation Coordinator, the appellant provides assistance and guidance on all aspects of the relocation program for the SO's estimated 15 to 20 annual moves. This work includes advising the employees relocating of entitlements as allowed by agency policy. The appellant calculates and prepares cost analysis sheets for the employee on all entitled expenses including temporary quarters subsistence, real estate cost, miscellaneous expense allowance, relocation income tax allowance, common carrier house hunting, storage of household goods, car rental, etc. She assists employees with filing travel expense claims related to the move and audits all relocation-related vouchers prior to submission to the NFC. The appellant also coordinates with moving companies to arrange transfer of household goods; obtains required information from employees and submits completed relocation travel vouchers to the Budget Officer; ensures payment is

made to moving, storage, or other relocation service companies; and completes quarterly reviews of open relocation obligations, makes necessary amendments to ensure remaining balance is valid, and submits accurate end-of-quarter accrual information to FFIS.

The appellant also serves as the point-of-contact for registering State employees to NRCS-approved training sessions and conferences. In this capacity, she disseminates training and conference information received from NRCS headquarters, collects the names of nominees, assists attendees and management with logistics information; and ensures compliance with the established budget for each training session or conference. This work also entails calculating the cost for each attendee and submitting it for approval to a designated approval authority.

The supervisor certified to the accuracy of the appellant's PD. However, in a January 27, 2010, statement to OPM, the appellant said her PD fails to fully describe her Vendor Coordinator duties, in addition to "...not stating that I perform quarterly and end of year budget functions including calculating accruals for recurring monthly expenses, reviewing accrual requests for input into the FFIS system."

A PD is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position by a responsible management official. A position is the duties and responsibilities which make up the work performed by an employee. The *Introduction* provides that, "As a rule, a position is classified on the basis of the duties actually performed." Additionally, 5 CFR 511.607(a)(1), in discussing PD accuracy issues, states OPM will decide classification appeals on the basis of the actual duties and responsibilities assigned by management and performed by the employee. The point here is that a real operating position is classified, not simply the PD. Our fact-finding confirmed the appellant's PD contains the major duties and responsibilities assigned by management and performed by the appellant, is adequate for classification purposes, and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

To help decide this appeal, we conducted telephone audits with the appellant on February 18 and 19, 2010, and a telephone interview with the first-level supervisor on March 10, 2010. In reaching our classification decision, we carefully considered all of the information gained from these interviews as well as all other information of record furnished by the appellant and her agency, including the PD of record.

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

The agency assigned the position to the GS-503 Financial Clerical and Technician Series, which includes positions performing clerical or technician work in support of accounting, auditing, budgeting, or financial management functions when no other established series in the GS-500, Accounting and Budget Group, is appropriate. The appellant's position is a "mixed series" position involving work covered by more than one occupational series; i.e., GS-525 Accounting Technician, GS-540 Voucher Examining, and the GS-561 Budget and Clerical Technician. We applied the grading criteria in the Job Family Standard (JFS) for Clerical and Technical Accounting and Budget Work, GS-500. As discussed further in the grade-level analysis that follows, we found no one set of duties predominates. Since the appellant's position is covered

by more than one series in the GS-500 occupational group, the general GS-503 series is appropriate.

The GS-503 series does not have prescribed titles, but positions classified at GS-5 and above must have *Technician* in the title. Otherwise, the agency may assign a title following the guidance in the *Introduction*.

### **Grade determination**

The GS-500 JFS uses the Factor Evaluation System format, under which factor levels and accompanying point values are assigned for each of the nine factors. The total is converted to a grade level by using the grade conversion table provided in the JFS. Under this system, each factor-level description demonstrates the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. 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 unless an equally important aspect that meets a higher level balances the deficiency. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level.

#### *Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position*

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts the employee must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, regulations, and principles) and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply the knowledge.

At Level 1-4, the work requires in-depth or broad knowledge of a body of accounting, budget, or other financial management regulations, practices, procedures, and policies related to the specific financial management functions. This includes knowledge of a wide variety of interrelated steps, conditions, and procedures or processes required to assemble, review, and maintain complex accounting, budget, or other fiscal transactions (e.g., reconciling amounts in accounting systems involving extensive subdivisions of accounts, frequent and varied adjustments to accounts, or extensive balancing and reconciling of detailed summary accounts); and/or knowledge of various accounting, budget, or other financial regulations, laws, and requirements (e.g., related fiscal regulations and applicable schedules, pay and leave rules, administrative rules associated with recording and tracking budgetary transactions, tax laws, entitlement rules, documentation requirements, schedules, deductions, etc.) to ensure compliance and recommend action. In addition, Level 1-4 work may require knowledge of a variety of accounting and budget functional areas and their relationships to other functions to research or investigate problems or errors requiring reconciling and reconstructing incomplete information, conducting extensive and exhaustive searches for required information, or performing actions of similar complexity; and/or knowledge of extensive and diverse accounting, budget, or other financial regulations, operations, and procedures governing a wide variety of types of related transactions to resolve nonstandard transactions, complaints, or discrepancies, provide advice, or perform other work requiring authoritative procedural knowledge.

In addition to that described at the Level 1-4, work at Level 1-5 requires knowledge of a broad, in-depth practical knowledge of accounting or other financial management technical methods,

techniques, precedent cases, and procedures to resolve especially difficult or sensitive problems. Employees typically use a knowledge of accounting methods, procedures, and techniques to conduct difficult and responsible analysis and determinations within a complete accounting system to validate transactions and to perform research to resolve inconsistencies; knowledge of the interrelationships of various accounting systems applications, as well as computer file systems and content to resolve problems of processed transactions; and knowledge of related financial regulations and rulings covering diverse types of transactions to typically function as a technical authority for the resolution of an extensive range of issues or problems.

The appellant's position meets Level 1-4. Her position requires applying extensive knowledge of the agency's accounting, budget, and other financial management practices, procedures, and policies to maintain obligation control for the SO's programs including the [name], [name], and others. As at Level 1-4, the appellant's work involves a variety of interrelated steps in reviewing and maintaining fiscal transactions in FFIS. For example, she utilizes FFIS to maintain a standard general ledger, record commitments, enter obligations for relocation travel reimbursements and other payments, and retrieve reports with quarterly and annual expenditures. As Relocation Coordinator, the appellant applies knowledge of travel relocation regulations and procedures in order to prepare estimates of an employee's approved entitlements, advise employees, coordinate with relocation service companies, process payments, audit relocation travel vouchers, ensure the correct appropriation of funds, and conduct quarterly reviews of open obligations and make necessary amendments. Like Level 1-4, this work requires applying an in-depth knowledge of the agency's regulations and procedures to advise staff and resolve nonstandard transactions or discrepancies.

The JFS provides illustrations for Level 1-4. Similar to the appellant's position, the illustration describes maintaining control accounts and subsidiary accounts and processing accounting transactions for a wide variety of functions including obligations, accrued expenditures, disbursements, appropriation refunds, expenditure vouchers, rejected transactions, and other accounts in connection with the general ledger. The Level 1-4 illustration describes receiving and reviewing purchase orders, contracts, and travel orders pertaining to claims and other similar documents against obligated funds. The appellant's work closely matches this illustration.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 1-5. Unlike this level, her work does not require conducting difficult and responsible analysis and determinations within a complete accounting or budgeting system. As Vendor Coordinator and National Vendor Liaison, the appellant is responsible for ensuring the data in the various financial systems match as any vendor error (e.g., a reject, content mismatch, IRS database mismatch, etc.) prevents a payment from processing timely in FFIS. She identifies vendor errors through FM reports or when notified by NRCS's system users. The appellant also provides training to NRCS employees on identifying and preventing vendor information errors in the multiple financial systems. Regardless, she is not assigned system-wide responsibility over accounting and budget activities. Instead, her work is limited to resolving problems associated with vendor information errors. In contrast to Level 1-5, the appellant's position is not structured to function as the technical authority for resolving an *extensive* range of accounting and budget issues or problems, nor is her position structured to function as the technical authority of automated accounting systems in determining the adequacy of the systems themselves, recommending changes to user manuals, or designing modifications

of existing systems. Her work is performed within the parameters of existing, well-established financial systems.

The JFS provides illustrations for Level 1-5. For example, employees at this level examine accounts or resolve difficult reconciliations requiring an analysis of adjustments and corrective entries in the account. They trace transactions entered and prepare worksheets to reflect the source of discrepancies, corrective action required to bring accounts into agreement, prove the accuracy of adjusted accounts, and recommend actions to prevent recurrence of similar discrepancies. In contrast, the appellant identifies and resolves situations involving vendor information errors. This work requires knowledge of the financial systems to store, manipulate, and retrieve data. These and other tasks performed by the appellant require a specific and straightforward course-of-action, precluding the need for the in-depth analysis (i.e., to trace transactions, prepare findings with problem cause and resolution, and make recommendations preventing a recurrence) described at Level 1-5.

Level 1-4 is credited for 550 points.

### *Factor 2, Supervisory Controls*

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct and indirect controls exercised by the supervisor. Employee responsibilities, as well as the review of completed work, are included. Employee responsibility depends upon the extent to which the employee is expected to develop the sequence and timing of various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modification of instructions, and to participate in establishing priorities and defining objectives. The degree of review of completed work depends upon the nature and extent of the review.

At Level 2-3, the highest level described in the JFS, the supervisor or other designated employee assigns work with standing instructions on objectives, priorities, and deadlines and provides guidance for unusually involved situations. The employee independently processes the most difficult procedural and technical tasks or actions and handles problems and deviations in accordance with instructions, policies, previous training, or accepted practices. The supervisor evaluates completed work for overall technical soundness and conformance to agency policies, legal, or system requirements. Completed work is spot checked for results and conformity to established requirements and deadlines. The methods used to complete the assignment are seldom reviewed in detail.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 2-3. As at this level, the Budget Officer provides general guidance. The appellant performs the routine work independently without specific instructions from the supervisor, requesting guidance only on unusual aspects of her work. Otherwise, she independently determines the types and sources of information needed to complete transactions; the nature and extent of deviations from established requirements; and whether standard techniques, methods, or procedures are appropriate for assignments as described at Level 2-3. The supervisor spot-checks the work for technical soundness and conformity with procedures.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.



*Factor 3, Guidelines*

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

At Level 3-3, the highest level described in the JFS, guidelines are the same as Level 3-2 (where guidelines include a number of established procedures and specific guidelines in the form of agency policies and procedures, Federal codes and manuals, specific related regulations, precedent actions, and processing manuals are readily available for doing the work and are clearly applicable to most transactions) but because of the complicating nature of the assignments, they lack the specificity, frequently change, or are not completely applicable to the work requirements, circumstances, or problems. For example, when completing a transaction, the employee may have to rely on experienced judgment, rather than guides, to fill in gaps, identify sources of information, and make working assumptions about what transpired. The employee uses judgment to interpret guides, adapt procedures, decide approaches, and resolve specific problems. This includes, e.g., using judgment to reconstruct incomplete files, devise more efficient methods for procedural processing, gather and organize information for inquiries, or resolve problems referred by others. The employee analyzes the results of applying guidelines and recommends changes such as suggesting specific changes to the guidelines themselves, the development of control mechanisms, additional training for employees, or specific guidance related to the procedural handling of documents and information.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 3-3. Similar to this level, she uses judgment in interpreting and adapting established guidelines including NRCS's General Manual; NFC's procedural manuals for processing payments; the Financial Management Manual for using the FFIS; USDA regulations such as the Agricultural Travel Regulations; and other laws and regulations such as the Federal Travel Regulation, Fair Debt Collection Act, and Prompt Pay Act; and National and State bulletins. The guidelines do not always apply directly to her assignments and require her to adapt to cover new work situations. For example, the appellant's work in coordinating and processing the relocation of SO employees requires researching and interpreting laws and regulations. She serves as the initial point of contact, advising employees and family members on entitlements, temporary quarters options, house hunting trips, etc. She also arranges for estimates, confirms moving dates, makes arrangements with relocation service companies, and ensures the timely submittal and auditing of relocation-related vouchers and documents. This work, as expected at Level 3-3, requires resolving problems and issues by selecting the most appropriate guidelines which normally do not apply directly to the situation. The appellant calculates and projects estimates for the SO's approximately 15 to 20 moves a year, where each situation is different, unpredictable, and occasionally complicated when reconciling relocation files or in comparing authorized expenses with actual costs. Typical of Level 3-3, her vendor coordinator and liaison work involves using judgment to apply guidelines when gaps exist in the procedural aspects of the work. For example, the appellant identifies and corrects rejects and mismatches with vendor information by examining data reported in SCIMS, ProTracts, FM, FFIS, and the IRS database. She also provides guidance to NRCS system users by researching and responding to inquiries when, for example, payment transactions are rejected due to content mismatches.

Level 3-3 is credited for 275 points.

*Factor 4, Complexity*

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

At Level 4-3, the work involves performing various accounting, budget, or financial management support related duties or assignments that use different and unrelated processes, procedures, or methods. The use of different procedures may result because transactions are not completely standardized; deadlines are continually changing; functions assigned are relatively broad and varied; or transactions are interrelated with other systems and require extensive coordination with other personnel. The employee decides what needs to be done by identifying the nature of the problem, question, or issue, and determining the need for and obtaining additional information through oral or written contacts or by reviewing regulations and manuals. The employee may have to consider previous actions and understand how these actions differ from or are similar to the issue at hand before deciding on an approach. At this level, the employee makes recommendations or takes actions (e.g., determine eligibility for deductions, entitlements, or claims, verify factual data, or make other financial determinations) based on a case-by-case review of the pertinent regulations, documents, or issues involved in each assignment or situation. For example, employees use different established procedures to review and reconcile various financial documents and records; resolve a variety of problems through coordination with vendors, employees, taxpayers; and review and reconcile various types of transactions involving multiple funds or a number of different control accounts, or numerous modifications to contracts.

At Level 4-4, the work is distinguished from the previous level by (1) the variety and complexity of examinations, transactions, or systems involved; (2) the nature and variety of problems encountered and resolved; and (3) the nature of independent decisions made by the employee. Work may require analysis, development or testing of a variety of established techniques and methods to evaluate alternatives and arrive at decisions, conclusions, or recommendations. For example, the employee interprets and tests user-defined specifications to modify an automated accounting system requiring broad knowledge of users' technical functions, program objectives, and impact of system changes on other functions, processes, and requirements. Or, the employee resolves complicated tax examinations involving substantial corrective actions or complicated adjustments. The work involves application of many different and unrelated processes and methods relating to examination or analysis of complex and unusual transactions requiring substantial research and thorough understanding of a wide variety of transactions and accounts. Decisions regarding what needs to be done include assessing unusual circumstances or conditions, developing variations in approach to fit specific problems, or dealing with incomplete, unreliable, or conflicting data. The JFS notes that Level 4-4 is creditable only when Level 1-5 is appropriately assigned to the position being evaluated.

The appellant's position meets Level 4-3. Similar to this level, she uses different and unrelated processes and procedures after deciding what needs to be done. She identifies the significant

characteristics of each assignment and the nature of the problem, question, or issue in order to determine the proper course of action for a variety of accounting, voucher examining, and budget functions. The appellant reviews the DDTR to ensure payments are made accurately. She also takes appropriate corrective action after identifying discrepancies when reviewing and reconciling a variety of transactions, informing the Budget Analyst of discrepancies. As Relocation Coordinator, the appellant prepares an estimate of approved relocation entitlements; determines the accounting classification, financial project chargeable, encumbrance number, object class, and type of expenditure; audits vouchers and contacts the employee when additional information is required for processing; forwards audited vouchers to the Budget Officer for final approval and signature; and completes quarterly reviews of open relocation obligations and makes necessary amendments to ensure the remaining balance is valid.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 4-4. Her assignments do not require the variety, complexity, decision making responsibility, and degree of originality in interpreting and correcting technical difficulties found at Level 4-4. The appellant's work involving the identification and correction of vendor information errors occurs within the realm of existing system fields and can be corrected by requesting additional information from the vendor or by reviewing data in multiple financial systems. In contrast to Level 4-4, the types of complexities and discrepancies encountered in the appellant's accounting, voucher examining, and budget work may be corrected on a case-by-case review of pertinent regulations, documents, records, or through coordination with other employees. Furthermore, assigning Level 4-4 to this position is not appropriate given that the knowledge required to perform the assigned work does not exceed Level 1-4.

Level 4-3 is credited for 150 points.

#### *Factor 5, Scope and Effect*

This factor covers the relationships between the nature of work (i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment) and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-2, the purpose of the work is to apply specific rules, regulations, or procedures to perform a full range of related accounting, budget, or financial management clerical or technical tasks, duties, and assignments that are covered by well-defined and precise program procedures and regulations. The employee completes standard clerical transactions in the functional area by reviewing documents for missing information, searching records and files; verifying and maintaining records of transactions; and answering routine procedural questions. Work affects the adequacy and efficiency of the accounting and budget, or financial management function and can affect the reliability of the work of analysts and specialists in related functions. For example, correcting data in automated records enables others to base decisions on accurate information. The work may also affect the accuracy of further processes performed by related personnel in various organizations. It also affects the reliability of the organization's financial support services provided to users, customers, etc.

At Level 5-3, the purpose of the work is to apply conventional practices to treat a variety of problems in accounting, budget or financial management transactions. Issues might result, e.g., from insufficient information about the transaction, a need for more efficient processing procedures, or requests to expedite urgently needed cases. The employee treats these or similar problems in conformance with established procedures. Work affects the quality, quantity, and accuracy of the organization's records, program operations, and service to clients. For example, the effect of the work ensures the integrity of the overall general ledger, its basic design, and the adequacy of the overall operation of the accounting system and various operating programs; the amount and timely availability of money to pay for services; the economic well-being of employees being serviced; or compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

The appellant's position meets Level 5-2. Similar to this level, the purpose of her work is to apply specific rules, regulations, and procedures in performing a full range of work associated with maintaining accurate accounts, vendor records, commitment and obligation records, etc.; keeping a general ledger; processing payments; preparing quarterly and annual expenditure reports; reconciling accounts and balances; and confirming the accuracy of vendor information. Consistent with Level 5-2, her work requires reviewing documents for missing information, searching records and files, verifying and maintaining transactions, and answering procedural questions. For example, payments to vendors cannot be processed if any financial system contains vendor information errors. To identify errors, the appellant pulls FM reports detailing rejected transactions, processed obligations, payments submitted to FFIS, and all other vendor-related activities. She, after identifying the source of errors, either corrects it or instructs appropriate staff to request additional information from the vendor. Like Level 5-2, the appellant's work affects the adequacy and efficiency of the Financial Management Staff and the timeliness, accuracy, and acceptability of further processes and services performed by other personnel.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 5-3. Unlike this level, the purpose of her work does not involve treating, analyzing, or investigating a variety of complex budget, accounting, or other financial management issues and problems. As Relocation Coordinator, the appellant inputs information into NFC's Travel System based on the employees' relocation questionnaire responses, reviews all relocation authorizations, estimates relocation expenses based on historical data and cost records, and monitors and records obligations and expenditures as required. This and other customary work involves verifying, assessing, or correcting data to examine and resolve a variety of conditions, issues, or problems. However, her work does not involve the problem-solving characteristics of Level 5-3 nor does it affect the actual design and operation of the accounting system or the system users.

Level 5-2 is credited for 75 points.

#### *Factors 6 and 7, Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts*

Personal contacts include face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place. These factors are interdependent. The same contacts selected for crediting

Factor 6 must be used to evaluate Factor 7. The appropriate level for personal contacts and the corresponding level for purpose of contacts are determined by applying the point assignment chart for Factors 6 and 7.

### *Personal Contacts*

At Level 2, contacts are with employees in the same agency but outside the immediate organization. For example, contacts may be with personnel in other functional areas. Contacts also may be with employees in other agencies who are providing requested information. At this level, contacts are with members of the general public in a moderately structured setting. For example, contacts may be with individuals who are explaining reasons for delays in making tax payment or those who are attempting to expedite transactions.

At Level 3, contacts are with members of the general public. For example, contacts are with persons in their capacities as representatives of others such as attorneys and accountants, contractors, public action groups, or congressional staff members making inquiries on behalf of constituents. The contacts are not recurring or routine and the purpose, role, and authority of each party must be established each time in order for the employee to determine the nature and extent of information that can be discussed or released.

The appellant's position meets Level 2. She has a variety of personal contacts to complete her assignments and the more routine are those with NRCS employees outside the immediate organization. For example, the appellant's contacts are with program managers and their representatives; financial and support staff; District Conservationists, Resource Conservationists, Soil Conservationists, and technicians; and administrative assistants at the State, area, and field offices (located in the northeastern, northwestern, and southern counties of [state]). She also contacts NFC employees. These contacts, which are comparable to Level 2, constitute a regular and recurring part of the job. The appellant has occasional contact with vendors and contractors. As these are rare, the contacts cannot be considered as controlling the evaluation of this factor. To be credited, the level of contacts must contribute to the successful performance of the work, have a demonstrable impact on the difficulty and responsibility of the position, require direct contact, and are a regular and recurring requirement. As a result, the appellant's personal contacts do not meet Level 3.

### *Purpose of Contacts*

At Level b, the purpose of contacts is to obtain, clarify, or provide information related to the accounting, budget, or financial management support assignments. This may involve answering a simple question, such as whether information has been received. It may also involve explaining more technically oriented subject matter questions, such as providing factual information, interpreting processing procedures, or similar information about a transaction.

At Level c, the purpose of contacts is to persuade individuals who are fearful, skeptical, uncooperative or threatening to provide information, take corrective action, and accept findings in order to gain compliance with established laws and regulations.

The appellant's position meets Level b. As at this level, the purpose of the appellant's contacts is to follow through on work efforts to resolve or prevent errors, delays, and other complications affecting the timely disbursement of payment. The appellant may have to persuade individuals typically working towards the same goals to submit paperwork and other information or to correct errors in documentation or data entry. Also at Level b, the appellant provides and obtains information for reasons including but not limited to clearing vendor errors, processing relocation program transactions, auditing vouchers, obligating funds, and coordinating with participants on State conferences. However, unlike Level c, none of the appellant's contacts involve persuading fearful, skeptical, or uncooperative individuals to gain compliance with established laws and regulations.

Level 2b is credited for 75 points.

*Factor 8, Physical Demands*

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities, as well as the extent of physical exertion involved in the work.

As at Level 8-1, which is the only level described in the JFS, the appellant's work is sedentary and free of special physical demands. The work involves some walking, bending, or stooping to retrieve files; however, the work does not require any unusual physical effort.

Level 8-1 is credited for 5 points.

*Factor 9, Work Environment*

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings. Additionally, any safety regulations related to the work assigned are considered.

As at Level 9-1, which is the only level described in the JFS, the appellant's work environment consists of an office setting and involves everyday risks or discomforts requiring normal safety precautions typical of an office setting.

Level 9-1 is credited for 5 points.

*Summary*

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-4	550
2. Supervisory Controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-3	150
5. Scope and Effect	5-2	75
6. & 7. Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts	2-b	75
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
<i>Total</i>		1,410

A total of 1,410 points falls within the GS-7 range (1,355 to 1,600) on the grade conversion table in the JFS.

**Decision**

The appellant's position is properly classified as GS-503-7, with the agency determining a title to include Technician.